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JOHN BROWDIE AND FANNY SQUEERS ARRIVE AT
THE SARACEN'S HEAD

Drawn by T. Onwhyn

DICKENSIAN INNS & TAVERNS

BY

B. W. MATZ

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AUTHOR OF

"THE INNS AND TAVERNS OF PICKWICK"

ETC., ETC.

WITH THIRTY-NINE ILLUSTRATIONS BY T. ONWHYN,

CHARLES G. HARPER, L. WALKER, F. G. KITTON, G. M. BRIMELOW

AND FROM PHOTOGRAPHS AND OLD ENGRAVINGS

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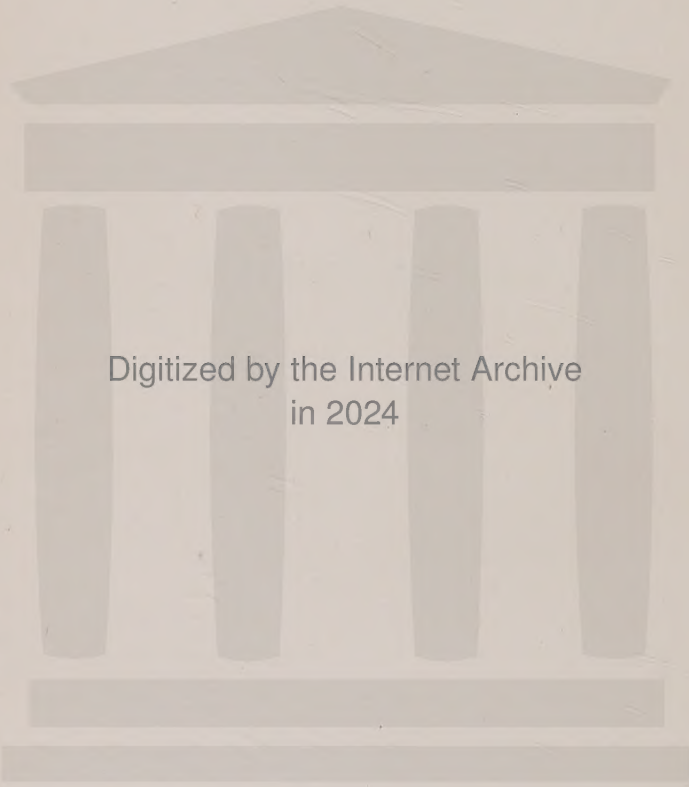
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TO
RIDGWELL CULLUM

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PREFACE

THE very friendly reception given to my previous book on the Inns and Taverns of Pickwick has encouraged me to pursue the subject through the other novels and writings of Dickens, and to compile the present volume.

I do not claim that it is encyclopædic in the sense that it will be found to supply a complete index to every inn mentioned in the novelist's books. Many a reader will recall, I expect, a certain inn in his favourite story which has been overlooked ; but, while my chief aim has been to deal with the famous and prominent ones, I have not ignored the minor ones which, in many cases, are also the most alluring, and often play an important part in the story.

The plan has been to take the long novels in something approximating to chronological order, followed by the shorter stories and sketches ; and, where an inn is mentioned in more than one book, to deal with it fully in the chapter devoted to the story in which it was first alluded to.

Inns associated with the novelist's own life find

PREFACE

no place in this volume, unless they have association also with his books.

In such a volume as this it is obviously necessary to quote freely from Dickens's books, but, when one recalls the young person's comment on lectures about Dickens that "she always loved them because of the quotations," no apology or excuse is needed here.

I am greatly indebted to my friends T. W. Tyrrell and Charles G. Harper for much valuable advice and assistance in my task. The former has kindly loaned me prints from his unique collection of topographical photographs, and has also given me the advantage of his expert knowledge of the subject.

How much I owe to the latter goes without saying. No one can write of old inns, old coaches, or old coaching roads without acknowledging indebtedness to the score of books standing in Mr. Harper's name, which are rich mines for any student of the subject quarrying for facts. He has not only permitted me to dig in his mines, but has allowed also the use of many of his charming drawings.

Acknowledgment is also made to Messrs. A. & C. Black, Messrs. Methuen & Co., and the proprietors of the Cheshire Cheese for the use of blocks on pages 24, 99 and 180 respectively.

B. W. MATZ.

DICKENSIAN INNS & TAVERNS

CHAPTER I

DICKENS AND INNS

IN these days when life is, for the most part, and for most of us, a wearying process of bustle and "business," it is comforting as well as pleasant to reflect that the old coaching inn still remains in all its quiet grandeur and the noble dignity which quaint customs and unbroken centuries of tradition have given to it. For a brief period in our recent history, it seemed that even so great a British institution as the old English inn, and its first cousin the tavern, were doomed to pass away. Indeed, the invention of railways, followed by the almost automatic suspension of the coach as a means of locomotion, did succeed actually in closing down many of them. But the subsequent invention of the motor-car reopened England's highways and

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

by-ways so that to-day there are unmistakable indications that the old English inn is once more acquiring that atmosphere of friendly hospitality and utility with which it was endowed in the past, and which is so faithfully reflected in every book of Dickens.

No one can really believe that the palatial and gilded hotels that sprang up in the place of scores of the old coaching inns possessed the same snug cheerfulness, the same appeal to the traveller, as did the old hostelries of the coaching era. To-day, this is being realised more and more, and when the time comes, as we are told is not far off, when everyone will have his own motor-car, mine host of every wayside inn and county town hostelry will once again become the prominent figure that Dickens made him. The real romance of the coaching era may never return. Perhaps we have become too matter-of-fact for that. But something approximating to the spirit and glamour of those days is possible still for those who are content to undertake a motor journey minus the feverish ambition for breaking speed records. In many an old-world English village stands an old-world English inn, and when that hour before sunset arrives that all travellers of the open road know—the moment when a luxuri-

DICKENS AND INNS

ous and healthy weariness overcomes us—ah, well, be sure the right sort of inn awaits you if you deserve such good fortune, and, when the time comes to fill pipes and sit at ease before a blazing log-fire, what better subject for your dreams will you find than the glowing pages of a Dickens book?

In them you get not only the romance and the glamour of the journey from place to place, but also descriptive pictures of the various inns, of their picturesque outward appearances, of their interior comfort and customs, of their glorious and luscious array of wholesome food and wine, to say nothing of the wonderful description of the happy company assembled there, all told with that incomparable charm and grace and good humour of a writer of genius.

Dickens not only knew how to describe an inn and its comforts (and its discomforts, too, sometimes), but he seemed to revel in doing so, and became filled with delight when he was one of the guests within its walls.

He seems to have shared Dr. Johnson's view that there was no private house in which people could enjoy themselves so well as at a good tavern, where there was general freedom from anxiety, and where you were sure of a welcome ;

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and to agree with him that there is nothing as yet contrived by man by which so much happiness is produced as in a good tavern or inn.

His books are full of the truth of this, and provide many such happy occasions when, after a cold coach drive, the hospitable host conducts the passengers to a large room made cosy with a roaring fire, and drawn curtains, and presenting an inviting spread of the good things of life, and a plentiful supply of the best wines or a bowl of steaming punch, for the jovial company. And the coach journey which brings one to these inns ! Is there any described with so much exhilaration to be found elsewhere ? Take the coach ride of Nicholas Nickleby along the Great North Road to his destination in Yorkshire. Here is reflected the real spirit of old-time travelling which brings us in touch with the old customs of the coaching age in a manner that no historian could possibly convey so realistically. Read again Tom Pinch's ride to London. We not only encounter old inns and old houses with their cherished memories, their old rooms, each with its own romantic atmosphere and a tale to tell, but we traverse picturesque by-ways and highways, which in themselves recall the past as well as reveal unchanging scenes of glorious nature ; we can ex-

DICKENS AND INNS

perience these feelings to-day in a way our fathers could not. The railroad, for a spell, made this impossible. To-day the road has come into its own again, and the motor-car brings back to us the glory of the road, the pleasure of the inn, and the enjoyment of the wonderful country which is England.

There seems to have been a positive allurement about an inn or tavern for Dickens which he could not resist. He lingered over the most decrepit and lowly public-house, such as the dirty Three Cripples, the resort of Bill Sikes, as he did over the sumptuous Pavilion Hotel at Folkestone. A wayside inn was as real a joy to him in its modest way as was the chief coaching hotel in a country town with its studied comfort.

When travelling about the country himself with his friends, some comment or pen-picture of the inn they stayed at creeps into his letters, as it would seem, by instinct. Even in his unpublished diary we see noted items about delightfully beautiful drives, coach offices, stage-coaches, and excellent inns. And, when he and Wilkie Collins went for their idle tour, it resolved itself into visiting the inns and coast corners in out-of-the-way places.

His knowledge of inns was stupendous. In

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

that Christmas story, "The Holly Tree," there are scores of them recalled, each recollection no doubt reminiscent of experiences and association.

One gets a gleam of the joy he experiences at such times in the extract from a letter to an American friend, in 1842, after he had gone for a trip into Cornwall with some bright and merry companions:

"If you could but have seen one gleam of the bright fires by which we sat at night in the big rooms of the ancient inns, or smelt but one steam of the hot punch which came in every evening in a huge broad china bowl!"

But instances could be multiplied.

Dickens saw something different in every inn, and succeeded in conveying it to the reader. There were no two inns alike to him. Each had its own tale to tell, its own individuality to reveal, its own atmosphere and fare to present, whatever its grade or social environment. As for an inn sign, it transported him into his most whimsical and pleasant of moods.

In the following pages an attempt has been made to gather together the material from his books which shows how Dickens delighted in everything appertaining to inns, and how he extracted from association with them all that glow of

DICKENS AND INNS

sentiment and joy which permeated their atmosphere in the old days, leaving their pictures in glowing words for all time.

There is nothing so calculated to make a place famous as mention of it in a classic story. It may have already had a past history by association with notable names and events, which gave it prominence in our annals for a time ; but in the case of a building, when it is demolished, it soon passes out of memory. If, however, Dickens has drawn a pen-picture of it, or, in the case of an old inn, has used it for a scene in one of his books, it can never be forgotten ; even when razed to the ground its fame survives, and the site becomes a Dickens landmark.

CHAPTER II

OLIVER TWIST

THE RED LION, BARNET—THE ANGEL, ISLINGTON
—THE COACH AND HORSES, ISLEWORTH—THE
THREE CRIPPLES—THE GEORGE INN—THE EIGHT
BELLS, HATFIELD

THERE are not many inns that can be identified in *Oliver Twist*, and those that can play very little part in the enactment of the story, or have any notable history to relate in regard to them. The first one to attract attention is that at Barnet, where the Artful Dodger took Oliver Twist for breakfast on the morning they encountered each other on the latter's tramp to London.

Although Dickens does not name this inn, we believe he had in mind the Red Lion, for it was one of those inns that was an objective when he and his friends went for a horse-ride out into the country. One such occasion was chosen when his eldest daughter, Manic, was born, in March,

THE RED LION, BARNET

1838. He invited Forster to celebrate the event by a ride "for a good long spell," and they rode out fifteen miles on the Great North Road. After dining at the Red Lion, in Barnet, on their way home, they distinguished the already memorable day, as Forster tells us, by bringing in both hacks dead lame.

This trip along the Great North Road was a favourite one, and Dickens consequently became well acquainted with the highway. At the time of Forster's specific reference to the Red Lion, Dickens was engaged on the early chapters of *Oliver Twist*, and we find him describing the district in those pages wherein particular mention is made of Barnet.

Tramping to London after leaving Mr. Sowerberry, the undertaker, Oliver, on the seventh morning, "limped slowly into the little town of Barnet," we are told. "The windows," Dickens proceeds, "were closed ; the street was empty ; not a soul was awakened to the business of the day." Oliver, with bleeding feet, and covered with dust, sat upon a doorstep. For some time he wondered "at the great number of public houses (every other house in Barnet was a tavern, large or small), gazing listlessly at the coaches as they passed through." Here he was dis-

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covered by Jack Dawkins, otherwise the Artful Dodger, who, taking pity on him, assisted him to rise, escorted him to an adjacent chandler's shop, purchased some ham and bread, and the two adjourned finally into a public-house tap-room, to regale themselves prior to continuing their journey to London. As the Red Lion was so familiar to Dickens, we may assume that this was the inn to which he referred.

The inn, no doubt, was the same from which Esther Summerson, in *Bleak House*, hired the carriage to drive to Mr. Jarndyce's house, near St. Albans. Arriving at Barnet, Esther, Ada and Richard found horses waiting for them, "but, as they had only just been fed, we had to wait for them, too," she said, "and got a long fresh walk over a common and an old battle-field, before the carriage came up." Doubtless the posting-house where this change was made was the Red Lion, for Dickens had used it for posting his own horse many a time.

It is there to-day, and drives a busy trade, more as a suburban hostelry than as a posting-inn.

Continuing their walk to London, the Artful Dodger and Oliver gradually reached Islington, and entered the City together. Islington in days gone by was a starting point for the mail-coaches



THE RED LION BARNET
Photograph by T. W. Tyrrell

THE ANGEL, ISLINGTON

going to the north, and as a consequence was famous for its old inns. Perhaps the most famous, particularly from the antiquarian standpoint, was the old Queen's Head, a perfect specimen of ancient domestic architecture, which was destroyed in 1829. Another was, of course, the Angel; but the house bearing that name to-day can claim none of the romance or attractiveness of its ancient predecessor, and has recently been modernised on the lines adopted by a very modern firm of caterers. But the Angel of its palmy days was well-known to Dickens, and, although he does not make it the scene of any prominent incident in his books, it has mention in *Oliver Twist* in the chapter describing Oliver's trudge to London. It was nearly eleven o'clock when he and the Artful Dodger reached the turnpike at Islington. They then crossed from the Angel into St. John's Road, on their way to the house near Field Lane, where Oliver was dragged in and the door closed behind him.

The inn is mentioned again in the same book on the occasion when Noah Claypole and Charlotte traversed the same road. "Mr. Claypole," we read, "went on, without halting, until he arrived at the Angel, at Islington, where he wisely judged, from the crowd of passengers and number of

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

vehicles, that London began in earnest." He, too, led the way into St. John's Road.

The Angel has been a London landmark for over two centuries. There have been at least three houses of the same name, but the one Dickens knew and referred to was apparently that built after the destruction in 1819 of the original.

In those days, it was the first halting-place, after leaving London, of coaches bound along the Holyhead and Great North Roads. The original house presented the usual features of a large old country inn, and "the inn yard, approached by a gateway in the centre, was nearly a quadrangle, with double galleries, supported by plain columns and carved pilasters, with caryatides and other figures." Now, as we have said, it is merely a very ordinary, everyday modern refreshment house.

The low public-house in the "filthiest" part of Little Saffron Hill, in whose dark and gloomy den, known as the parlour, was frequently to be found Bill Sikes and his dog, Bull's-Eye, probably was no particular public-house so far as the novelist was concerned, although he gave it the distinguishing name of the Three Cripples. At any rate, it has not been identified, and must be assumed to be typical of the many with which



THE COACH AND HORSES ISLEWORTH

Drawn by C. G. Harper.

THE THREE CRIPPLES

this district at one time was infested. First referred to in Chapter XV, it is more minutely described in Chapter XXVI. "The room," we are told, "was illuminated by two gas-lights, the glare of which was prevented by the barred shutters and closely drawn curtains of faded red from being visible outside. The ceiling was blackened, to prevent its colour from being injured by the flaring lamps ; and the place was so full of dense tobacco smoke that at first it was scarcely possible to discern anything more. By degrees, however, as some of it cleared away, through the open door, an assemblage of heads, as confused as the voices that greeted the ear, might be made out ; and, as the eye grew more accustomed to the scene, the spectators gradually became aware of the presence of a numerous company, male and female, crowded round a long table, at the upper end of which sat a showman with a hammer of office in his hands, while a professional gentleman with a bluish nose, and his face tied up for the benefit of a toothache, presided at a jingling piano in a remote corner." That was a scene common to the "low public-house," of which the Three Cripples was a notorious example, and the atmosphere depicted no doubt applied generally to most of them.

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

On the other hand, the Coach and Horses, at Isleworth, where Bill Sikes and Oliver alighted from the cart they had "begged a lift" in, is no flight of Dickens's imagination and can be discovered to-day exactly where he located it.

The tramp of the two from Spitalfields to Chertsey on the burglary expedition can easily be followed from Dickens's clearly indicated itinerary. The point on the journey where they obtained their lift in a cart bound for Hounslow was near Knightsbridge. Having bargained with the driver to put them down at Isleworth, they at length alighted a little way beyond "a public-house called the Coach and Horses, which stood at the corner of a road just beyond Isleworth leading to Hampton." They did not enter this public-house, but continued their journey. Mr. John Sayce Parr, in an article in *The Dickensian*, Vol. I, page 261, speaks of the topographical accuracy of Dickens in this instance: "The literary pilgrim," he says, "sets out to follow the route he indicates, doubtful if he will find the places mentioned. There is, however, not the slightest excuse for making mistakes, for Dickens apparently visited the scenes and described them with the accuracy of a guide-book. Thus, one finds the Coach and Horses, sure enough, at the point where

THE COACH AND HORSES, ISLEWORTH
Brentford ends and Isleworth begins, by the
entrance to Sion Park, and near the spot where
the road rambles off to the left."

The Coach and Horses, the same writer says, is
not a picturesque inn. It is a huge four-square
lump of a place, and wears, indeed, rather a dour



Drawn by F. G. Kil' on

and forbidding aspect. It is unquestionably the
house of which Dickens speaks, and was built
certainly not later than the dawn of the nine-
teenth century.

It still exists to-day, although the surroundings

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

have altered somewhat by the advent of the electric tramways and other "improvements."

The George Inn, mentioned in Chapter XXXIII, where Oliver took the letter for Mr. Losberne to be sent by "an express on horseback to Chertsey," cannot be identified, as the market-town in whose market-place it stood is not mentioned or hinted at. Mr. Percy FitzGerald claims that the description applies to Chertsey, but, as the letter had to be taken to Chertsey, something seems wrong in his deduction.

In the chapter describing the flight of Bill Sikes, we read that, on leaving London behind, he shaped his course for Hatfield. "It was nine o'clock at night when the man, quite tired out, and the dog, limping and lame from the unaccustomed exercise, turned down the hill by the church of the quiet village, and, plodding along the little street, crept into a small public-house whose scanty light had guided them to the spot. There was a fire in the tap-room, and some of the country labourers were drinking before it. They made room for the stranger, but he sat down in the farthest corner, and ate and drank alone, or rather with his dog, to whom he cast a morsel of food from time to time." Here he met the pedlar with his infallible composition for removing

THE EIGHT BELLS, HATFIELD

blood-stains. This particular public-house is no doubt the Eight Bells, a picturesque old house which still remains on the spot where Dickens accurately located it. It is a quaint little building with a red-tiled roof and dormer windows, and local tradition assigns it as that at which Bill Sikes sought refuge for a short time before continuing his journey to St. Albans, enabling Hatfield to claim it as a veritable Dickens landmark, together with that other, the churchyard, where Mrs. Lirriper's husband was buried.

CHAPTER III

NICHOLAS NICKLEBY

THE SARACEN'S HEAD, SNOW HILL

THE Saracen's Head Inn, Snow Hill, long since demolished, is familiar to all readers of *Nicholas Nickleby*, because it was the hotel from which Squeers took coach with his boys for Dotheboys Hall ; and, but for the fact, the name of Saracen's Head would recall little or nothing to the ordinary Londoner.

It stood on Snow Hill or Snore Hill, as it was called in the very early days, and its exact location was two or three doors from St. Sepulchre's Church, down the hill, and was one of London's oldest and most historic inns, dating back to the 12th century. The first mention of it that we can find is in a volume by John Lydgate, the Benedictine monk who flourished in the early part of the 15th century, who is best remembered by his

THE SARACEN'S HEAD

poem, "The London Lyckpenny." He tells the story of the origin of the name, which is interesting as fixing an early date at which the inn existed ; even if it cannot be vouched for as correct in face of the fact that others have been suggested, it is at least as plausible.

It would appear that, when Richard Cœur-de-Lion returned from the Third Crusade in 1194, he approached the city of London and entered it by the New Gate, on the west. Being much fatigued by his long journey, the weary monarch, on arriving at Snow Hill, outside the gate, stopped at an inn there and called loudly to a tapster for refreshment. He drank rather freely, "untille ye hedde of ye Kinge did swimme ryghte royallie." He then began laying about him right and left with a battle-axe, to the "astoundmente and dyscomfythure of ye courtierres." Upon which one of the Barons said, "I wish hys majestie hadde ye hedde of a Saracen before hym juste now, for I trowe he woulde play ye deuce wyth itte." Thereupon the King paid all the damage and gave permission that the inn should be called "Ye Saracen's Hedde."

It is a pretty story, and, as we have suggested, may or may not be true ; but it gives us a starting point in the history of the inn. How long

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

before this incident the inn had existed and what its name was previously, we cannot say.

Lydgate refers to the inn's name again in the following stanza of one of his poems :

Richarde hys sonne next by successyon,
Fyrst of that name—strong, hardy and abyлле—
Was crowned Kinge, called Cuer de Lyon,
With Sarasenys hedde served at hys tabyelle.

The inn, by virtue of its situation, was in the centre of many an historic event enacted in the surrounding streets, and would naturally be the resort of those taking part in them. If records existed, many a thrilling tale could be gathered from their perusal ; as it is, only meagre details can be furnished.

In 1522, Charles V of Germany, when on his visit to London, stayed at the inn, and his retinue occupied three hundred beds, whilst stabling for forty horses was needed also ; evidence that it was no mean hostelry, in spite of the fact that Stow's record of the inn's existence in his " Survey of London " is confined to the following sentence :

" Hard by St. Sepulchre's Church is a fayre and large inn for the receipt of travellers, and hath to signe the ' Saracen's Head.' "

A few years later (1617) we get another reference to the hostel, in Wm. Fennor's " The Comptor's

THE SARACEN'S HEAD

Commonwealth," a book describing the troubles of an unfortunate debtor in the hands of serjeants and gaolers. Therein is an allusion to a serjeant



THE SIGN OF THE SARACEN'S HEAD

"with a phisnomy much resembling the 'Saracen's Head,' without Newgate," alluding, of course, to the figurehead on the sign-board of the inn.

It goes without saying that the famous Pepys knew the house, and we have the following entry

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

in his diary as confirmation: "11 Nov. 1661. To the wardrobe with Mr. Townsend and Mr. Moore and then to the 'Saracen's Head' to a barrel of oysters." How Bob Sawyer and Benjamin Allen would have revelled in that occasion!

The inn and the church were both victims of the Great Fire in 1666, but both were rapidly rebuilt on the old sites. From the time the original inn was erected in the 12th century, until the last of its race on the same site was demolished in 1868, doubtless there had been more than one Saracen's Head, and through this long stretch of years it was a favoured resort of all sorts and conditions of men.

In 1672, John Bunyan, after his release from Bedford Gaol, paid frequent visits to London by coach to the Saracen's Head, and it is recorded that he spent several nights within its hospitable walls; and we are told that Dean Swift made the inn his headquarters in 1710, on his visits to London from Ireland. An even more famous man, in the person of Horatio Nelson, at the early age of twelve years, stayed a night there prior to making his first voyage in a merchant ship in 1770. Many years afterwards, when he had become world-famous as Lord Nelson, the

THE SARACEN'S HEAD

proprietor of the hostelry, in honour of the early event, named his smartest coach after the admiral.

These are a few bare facts worth recording of an inn which was the most prominent of the coaching inns of London, as it was one of the largest and most flourishing. At one period of its history, coaches started from it for almost every large town in England and Scotland, and over 200 horses were kept in readiness for the purpose.

During the years 1780-1868, the inn had been managed by three generations of the Mountain family, the most notable member of which, owing perhaps to the coaching era then being at its height, was Sarah Ann Mountain, who succeeded her husband in 1818. Innkeeping in those days was one of the most ancient and honourable of professions, and Mrs. Mountain was evidently an ornament to the calling. She was a keen competitor in the business of coach proprietors, and set the pace to other coach owners by putting on the first really fast coach to Birmingham, which did the journey of 109 miles in 11 hours. At that time thirty coaches left her inn daily, amongst them being the "Tally Ho!" the fast coach referred to, whose speed was, we are told, the cause of the furious racing on the St. Albans, Coventry and Birmingham roads up to 1838. At

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

the rear of the inn, Mrs. Mountain had a busy coach factory, and sold her vehicles to other coach proprietors. One of her advertisements announced that "Good, comfortable stage-coaches, with lamps," could be purchased "at 110 to 120 guineas."

It was at this period of its prosperity that Dickens made the Saracen's Head a centre of interest in his novel, *Nicholas Nickleby*. Ralph Nickleby, being anxious to find employment for his nephew Nicholas, called upon him one day and produced the following advertisement in the newspaper :

"EDUCATION.—At Mr. Wackford Squeers' Academy, Dotheboys Hall, at the delightful village of Dotheboys, near Greta Bridge, in Yorkshire, Youth are boarded, clothed, booked, furnished with pocket-money, provided with all necessaries, instructed in all languages living and dead, mathematics, orthography, geometry, astronomy, trigonometry, the use of globes, algebra, single stick (if required), writing, arithmetic, fortification, and every other branch of classical literature. Terms, twenty guineas per annum. No extras, no vacations, and diet unparalleled. Mr. Squeers is in town, and attends daily, from one till four, at the Saracen's Head, Snow Hill. N.B.—An able

THE SARACEN'S HEAD

assistant wanted. Annual salary £5. A Master of Arts preferred."

"There!" said Ralph, folding the paper again. "Let him get that situation, and his fortune is made."

After some little discussion, Nicholas decided to try for the post, and the two men set forth together in quest of Mr. Squeers at the meeting place announced in the advertisement.

Before Nicholas and his uncle met Squeers, Dickens proceeded, in one of his very picturesque passages, to give a description, first of Snow Hill and then of the Saracen's Head:

"Snow Hill! What kind of place can the quiet town's-people who see the words emblazoned, in all the legibility of gilt letters and dark shading, on the north-country coaches, take Snow Hill to be? All people have some undefined and shadowy notion of a place whose name is frequently before their eyes, or often in their ears. What a vast number of random ideas there must be perpetually floating about regarding this same Snow Hill. The name is such a good one. Snow Hill—Snow Hill, too, coupled with a Saracen's Head: picturing to us by a double association of ideas something stern and rugged! A bleak, desolate tract of country, open to piercing blasts

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

and fierce wintry storms—a dark, cold, gloomy heath, lonely by day and scarcely to be thought of by honest folks at night—a place which solitary wayfarers shun, and where desperate robbers congregate; this, or something like this, should be the prevalent notion of Snow Hill, in those remote and rustic parts, through which the Saracen's Head, like some grim apparition, rushes each day and night with mysterious and ghost-like punctuality; holding its swift and headlong course in all weathers, and seeming to bid defiance to the very elements themselves."

The reality, he goes on to say, was rather different, and presents the true picture of it as it really was, situated in the very core of London, surrounded by Newgate, Smithfield, the Compter and St. Sepulchre's Church—

"and, just on that particular part of Snow Hill where omnibus horses going eastward seriously think of falling down on purpose, and where horses in hackney cabriolets going westward not unfrequently fall by accident, is the coach-yard of the Saracen's Head inn; its portal guarded by two Saracens' heads and shoulders—there they are, frowning upon you from each side of the gateway. The inn itself, garnished with another Saracen's Head, frowns upon you from the top of

THE SARACEN'S HEAD

the yard ; while from the door of the hind boot of all the red coaches that are standing therein there glares a small Saracen's Head, with a twin



THE SARACEN'S HEAD SNOW HILL

From an old Print

expression to the large Saracen's Head below, so that the general appearance of the pile is decidedly of the Saracenic order.

“ When you walk up this yard, you will see the booking-office on your left, and the tower of St. Sepulchre's Church, darting abruptly up into the

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sky, on your right, and a gallery of bedrooms on both sides. Just before you, you will observe a long window with the words 'coffee-room' legibly painted above it; and, looking out of the window, you would have seen in addition, if you had gone at the right time, Mr. Wackford Squeers with his hands in his pockets."

Here, Mr. Squeers was standing "in a box by one of the coffee-room fire-places, fitted with one such table as is usually seen in coffee-rooms, and two of extraordinary shapes and dimensions made to suit the angles of the partition," waiting for fond parents and guardians to bring their little boys for his treatment. At the moment he had only secured one, but presently two more were added to the list, and, during the bargaining with their stepfather, Ralph Nickleby and his nephew arrived on the scene. The incident of Nicholas's engagement for the post will be recalled by all and need not be repeated here. As the uncle and nephew emerged from the Saracen's Head gateway, Ralph promised Nicholas he would return in the morning to see him "fairly off" by the coach.

Nicholas kept his appointment by arriving at the Saracen's Head in good time, and went in search of Mr. Squeers in the coffee-room, where he

THE SARACEN'S HEAD

discovered him breakfasting with three little boys. The sound of the coach horn quickly brought the frugal repast to an end, and "the little boys had to be got up to the top of the coach and their boxes had to be brought out and put in." All was animation in the coach-yard when Nicholas's mother and sister and his uncle arrived to bid him good-bye.

"A minute's bustle, a banging of the coach doors, a swaying of the vehicle to one side, as the heavy coachman, and still heavier guard, climbed into their seats; a cry of all right, a few notes from the horn, a hasty glance of two sorrowful faces below and the hard features of Mr. Ralph Nickleby—and the coach was gone too, and rattling over the stones of Smithfield."

And so the Saracen's Head is left behind, and is not referred to again until John Browdie comes to London with his newly wed wife, Tilda Price that was, and her friend, Fanny Squeers. Dismounting near the Post Office he called a hackney coach, and, placing the ladies and the luggage hurriedly in, commanded the driver to "Noo gang to the Sarah's Head, mun."

"To the *were*?" cried the coachman.

"Lawk, Mr. Browdie," interrupted Miss Squeers.

"The idea! Saracen's Head."

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"Surely," said John, "I know'd it was something about Sarah's Son's Head. Dost thou know thot?"

"Oh ah! I know that," replied the coachman gruffly, as he banged the door.

Arriving there safely they all retired to rest, and in the morning partook of a substantial breakfast in "a small private room upstairs, commanding an uninterrupted view of the stables." Fanny Squeers made anxious enquiries for her father who had been in London some time seeking the lost Smike. She was under the impression that he made the Saracen's Head his headquarters, but was woefully disillusioned when she was informed that he "was not stopping in the house, but that he came there every day, and that when he arrived he should be shown upstairs." He shortly appeared, and the good-hearted John Browdie invited him to "pick a bit," which he promptly did.

Mr. Squeers did not make the Saracen's Head his abiding place; he was too mean for that; John Browdie, who was up for a holiday, stayed there the whole time he was in London, and some very merry, not to say solid meals he enjoyed during the period—for John liked a good meal.

On one such occasion, when Nicholas was a

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guest, the conviviality was sadly marred by a terrible quarrel between Fanny Squeers and her father, and Mrs. and John Browdie—Nicholas incidentally coming in for some of the abuse. Very nasty and cutting things were said on both sides, and Mr. Squeers was summarily dismissed with a threat from John that he would “pound him to flour.”

After the excitement had subsided and the Squeers family had withdrawn in a perfect hurricane of rage, John calmly ordered of the waiter another “Sooper—very coomfortable and plenty o’ it at ten o’clock . . . and ecod we’ll begin to spend the evening in earnest.”

The storm had long given place to a calm the most profound, and the evening pretty far advanced, when there occurred in the inn another incident more angry still, and reached a state of ferocity which could not have been surpassed, we are told, if there had actually been a Saracen’s Head then present in the establishment. Nicholas and John Browdie, following to where the noise came from, discovered coffee-room customers, coachmen and helpers congregating round the prostrate figure of a young man, with another young man standing in defiance over him. The latter was no other than Frank Cheeryble, who,

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overhearing disrespectful and insolent remarks coming from his opponent in the fray, relative to a young lady, had taken the part of the latter by vigorously setting about the traducer, who was ultimately turned out of the inn. Frank Cheeryble was staying the night in the house, and so the four friends adjourned upstairs together and spent a pleasant half-hour with great satisfaction and mutual entertainment.

These are the chief associations the Saracen's Head had in connection with *Nicholas Nickleby*, except that it might be mentioned that Mrs. Nickleby, as she would, confused its sign with that of another notable inn, by referring to it as the "Saracen with two necks."

There are, however, two other references to the inn in Dickens's books. In *Our Mutual Friend*, we read that :

"Mrs. Wilfer's impressive countenance followed Bella with glaring eyes, presenting a combination of the once popular sign of the Saracen's Head with a piece of Dutch clockwork"; and again, in one of his Uncommercial papers, Dickens, speaking of his wanderings about London and of having left behind him this and that historic spot, says he "had got past the Saracen's Head (with an ignominious rash of posting bills dis-

THE SARACEN'S HEAD

figuring his swarthy countenance) and had strolled up the yard of its ancient neighbour," making clear that the old inn was a notable landmark to him. He knew it in the flourishing days of the coaching era and lived to see it demolished in 1868 to allow of the Metropolitan improvements in the neighbourhood.

But its name was not to be entirely erased from London's annals, for another inn, although quite an unromantic one, was erected at the lower end of Snow Hill, only to wither in course of time into an unprofitable concern and to give up the ghost as a tavern. In 1912, this building was taken over by a firm of manufacturers of fancy leather goods and kindred articles of commerce, who recast the building for the purpose of their trade and its necessary business offices.

The proprietors have retained the old sign of the Saracen's Head and have done much to keep up the association of the name with the most notable and living part of its history—that of its connection with Dickens's story of *Nicholas Nickleby*.

Over the entrance they have placed a bust of Dickens mounted on a pedestal, flanked on each side by full-length figures of Nicholas and Squeers. Whilst on each side of the entrance porch is a

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bas-relief of a scene from *Nicholas Nickleby*: one representing Nicholas, Squeers and the boys preparing to leave the inn by coach, and the other, the well-known scene in Dotheboys Hall, depicting Nicholas thrashing Squeers.

And so, from out of seven centuries of historical associations, the one that emerges and remains to-day is that created by Dickens.

CHAPTER IV

NICHOLAS NICKLEBY (*continued*)

THE PEACOCK, ISLINGTON — THE WHITE HORSE,
ETON SLOCOMBE — THE GEORGE, GRANTHAM — THE
GEORGE AND NEW INN, GRETA BRIDGE — THE KING'S
HEAD, BARNARD CASTLE — THE UNICORN, BOWES
— THE INN ON THE PORTSMOUTH ROAD — THE
LONDON TAVERN — AND OTHERS

THE first stop of Nicholas's coach after it had left the Saracen's Head was at the Peacock, at Islington, an inn of immense popularity in those palmy days when the north-country mail-coaches made it their headquarters. It stood a little further north of the Angel, and was even more famous than that historic inn. Besides being the starting point for certain coaches, it was the house of call for nearly all others going in that direction out of London, and the busy and exciting

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scenes which ensued outside its doors became more bewildering still by the ostlers calling out the name of each coach as it arrived.

Such a scene, no doubt, was witnessed by Nicholas, in whose charge Squeers had placed the scholars, when, "between the manual exertion and the mental anxiety attendant upon his task, he was not a little relieved when the coach stopped at the Peacock, Islington. He was still more relieved when a hearty-looking gentleman, with a very good-humoured face and a very fresh colour, got up behind, and proposed to take the other corner of the seat," as he thought it would be safer for the youngsters if they were sandwiched between Nicholas and himself.

Everything and everybody being settled, off they went "amidst a loud flourish from the guard's horn and the calm approval of all the judges of coaches and coach-horses congregated at the Peacock."

That was in 1838; later (in 1855) Dickens refers again to the same inn. But on that occasion the scene must have been one of great tranquillity and calm, if not a little dismal.

This was when the bashful man, as related in the "first branch" of *The Holly Tree*, starts on his journey to the Holly Tree Inn. "There was no



THE PEACOCK, ISLINGTON
From an old Engraving

THE PEACOCK, ISLINGTON

Northern Railway at that time," he says, "and in its place there were stage-coaches ; which I occasionally find myself, in common with some other people, affecting to lament now, but which everybody dreaded as a very serious penance then. I had secured the box seat on the fastest of these, and my business in Fleet Street was to get into a cab with my portmanteau, so to make the best of my way to the Peacock at Islington, where I was to join this coach. . . . When I got to the Peacock, where I found everybody drinking hot purl, in self-preservation, I asked if there were an inside seat to spare. I then discovered that, inside or out, I was the only passenger. This gave me a still livelier idea of the great inclemency of the weather, since that coach always loaded particularly well. However, I took a little purl (which I found uncommonly good), and got into the coach. When I was seated they built me up with straw to the waist, and, conscious of making a rather ridiculous appearance, I began my journey. It was still dark when we left the Peacock."

A reference to the same inn is made in "Tom Brown's Schooldays," when Tom and his father stayed the night there in order to catch the "Tally-Ho" coach for Rugby the next morning.

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There is still a reminder of the old Peacock at 11 High Street, where a sign-board announces the date of its establishment in 1564, and a relic of the coaching days may be seen in the form of an iron hook upon a lamp-post opposite, to which horses were temporarily tethered.

Following Nicholas's coach on its journey north we find it passing through the counties of Hertford and Bedford in bitterly and intensely cold weather. In due course it arrived at Eton Slocombe, where a halt was made for a good coach dinner, of which all passengers partook, "while the five little boys were put to thaw by the fire, and regaled with sandwiches." Mr. Squeers, it may be noted in passing, had, in the interim, alighted at almost every stage to refresh himself, leaving his charges on the top of the coach to content themselves with what was left of their breakfast.

Eton Slocombe is Dickens's thinly disguised name for Eaton Socon, a picturesque little village of one straggling street in Huntingdonshire. He does not mention the inn by name, but it may be rightly assumed that it was the White Horse, an attractive old road-side coaching-house, which, in those days, was the posting inn for the mail and other coaches passing through the county. In

THE INN AT ETON SLOCOMBE

later years it became the favourite resort of the North Road Cycling Club, and witnessed the beginning and ending of many a road race in the " 'eighties " and " 'nineties," and is, no doubt, a welcome place of call for motorists to-day.

Leaving Eton Slocombe, the coach took the turnpike road via Stilton, as the night and the snow came on together. In the dismal weather the coach rambled on through the deserted streets of Stamford until twenty miles further on it arrived at the George at Grantham, where "two of the front outside passengers, wisely availing themselves of their arrival at one of the best inns in England, turned in for the night." The remainder of the passengers, however, "wrapped themselves more closely in their coats and cloaks, and, leaving the light and the warmth of the town behind them, pillowed themselves against the luggage, and prepared, with many half-suppressed moans, again to encounter the piercing blast which swept across the open country."

Grantham has the reputation of being a town of many and excellent inns, of which the honours seem to have been divided between the Angel and the George. When Dickens set out on his voyage in search of facts concerning the Yorkshire

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schools prior to writing *Nicholas Nickleby* he took the same coach journey which he describes so realistically in his book, accompanied by his artist friend, Phiz. They slept the night at the George, like the two wise "front outsides" of the story; and in a letter to his wife Dickens said that the George was "the very best inn I have ever put up at," and he repeats this encomium in his book.

The George was burnt down in 1780 and its beautiful mediæval structure replaced by a building not so picturesque, but none the less comfortable. It was a famous coaching inn and consequently always busy with the mail and stage coaches of the period. It is a square red-bricked building of the Georgian type, and, although its outward appearance is not so inviting from an antiquarian point of view as its predecessor, the testimony of travellers confirms its interior comfort.

The coach carrying Squeers and his party was little more than a stage out of Grantham, "or half-way between it and Newark," to be precise, when the accident occurred which turned the vehicle over into the snow. After the bustle which ensued and after casualties had been attended to, all walked back to the nearest

THE GEORGE, GRETA BRIDGE

public-house, described as a "lonely place, with no great accommodation in the way of apartments." Here, having "washed off all effaceable marks of the late accident," they settled down to the comfort of a warm room in patient anticipation of the arrival of another coach from Grantham. As this entailed a two hours' wait the company amused themselves by listening to the narration of the story of "The Five Sisters of York" by the grey-haired gentleman, and of "The Baron of Grogzwig" by the merry-faced gentleman. Which was the "public-house" round whose fire these two famous stories were told, the chronicler does not say, nor has it been identified. At the conclusion of the last-named story the welcome announcement of the arrival of the new coach was made and the company resumed the journey. Nothing further of any note occurred until at six o'clock that night, when Nicholas, Squeers "and the little boys and their united luggage were all put down together at the George and New Inn, Greta Bridge." The coach having traversed the road via Retford and Bawtry, crossed Yorkshire, via Doncaster and Borough Bridge to this inn "in the midst of a dreary moor," as Dickens so described it.

Although Greta Bridge was but a small and

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

picturesque hamlet at the time Dickens visited and wrote of it, it nevertheless boasted at least two important inns doing a busy trade with the coaches and mail on the main coaching route to Glasgow. These were known as the George and the New Inn respectively, and were about half a mile apart. In his book the novelist combines the two names, perhaps to avoid identification ; but there seems no doubt that the George was the inn Dickens and Phiz stayed at themselves, and therefore it may be assumed it was at that inn Nicholas and Squeers also alighted when their coach journey ended. The George stands near the bridge which spans the Greta river a little above its junction with the Tees. It is no longer an inn, having since been converted into a residential building known as "The Square" and let out in tenements. But it still shows unmistakable signs of its former calling. Its large square yard remains, although want of use has allowed grass to overgrow it ; whilst its commodious stabling, empty and bare as it is, conjures up the busy scenes of excitement and animation the mail-coaches and travellers must have created in those far-off days.

The inn was the coaching centre of the district, received the mail as it arrived and despatched it

THE GEORGE, GRETA BRIDGE

to the villages round about. Dickens was evidently very pleased with the hospitality he received on his arrival after a dreary journey, for when writing to his wife he said :

“ At eleven we reached a bare place with a house standing alone in the midst of a dreary



THE GEORGE INN, GRETA BRIDGE
Drawn by C. G. Harper

moor, which the guard informed me was Greta Bridge. I was in a perfect agony of apprehension, for it was fearfully cold, and there were no outward signs of anyone being up in the house ; but to our great joy we discovered a comfortable room, with drawn curtains, and a most blazing fire. In

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

half an hour they gave us a smoking supper, and a bottle of mulled port, in which we drank your health, and then retired to a couple of capital bedrooms, in each of which there was a rousing fire half-way up the chimney. We had for breakfast toast, cakes, a Yorkshire pie, a piece of beef about the size and much the shape of my portmanteau, tea, coffee, ham, eggs ; and are now going to look about us."

Dickens seems to be a little misleading in saying the inn stood on the heath. It was actually in the village by the side of the road. But he apparently got this idea that the house stood "alone in the midst of a dreary moor" well into his mind, for, when using the inn again as the original of the Holly Tree Inn in the charming Christmas story with that name, we find that the bashful man is made to speak of it as being on a bleak wild solitude of the Yorkshire moor. He describes the interior in many whimsical details, perhaps at times a little exaggerated, as, for instance, when he says his bedroom was some quarter of a mile from his huge sitting-room. Next day it was still snowing, and, not knowing what to do, he, in desperation, invited the Boots "to take a chair—and something in a liquid from—and talk" to him. This he did and the

THE KING'S HEAD, BARNARD CASTLE

delightful story of Mr. and Mrs. Harry Walmers, junior, the chief incidents of which all took place in the same inn, was recalled by the Boots.

But to return to Squeers and his party :

Having run into the tavern to "stretch his legs," he returned in a few minutes, as, at the same time, there emerged from the yard a rusty, pony-chaise, and a cart, driven by two labouring men. By these conveyances he transported his charges to "the delightful village of Dotheboys" about three miles away.

Nicholas was preparing for bed that evening when the letter Newman Noggs had given him in London fell out of his pocket unopened. This letter interests at the moment by reason of its postscript, which runs : "If you should go near Barnard Castle, there is good ale at the King's Head. Say you know me, and I am sure they will not charge you for it. You may say *Mr.* Noggs there, for I was a gentleman then. I was indeed."

It is not recorded that Nicholas had occasion to visit the King's Head, Barnard Castle, but we know that Dickens went there after having explored the neighbourhood of Greta Bridge. He and Phiz made the journey in a post chaise, there to deliver the letter Mr. Charles Smithson,

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the London solicitor, had given him by way of introduction to a certain person who would help him in his discoveries about the Yorkshire schools.

Barnard Castle is about four miles from Greta Bridge, and is in the county of Durham, just across the Yorkshire border. Arriving there Dickens made the King's Head his headquarters. Since that date the inn has been enlarged somewhat, but much of the older portion remains the same as when he stayed there.

It was here the interview referred to above took place before a fire in one of the cosiest rooms in the building, and the person who furnished the information became the original of John Browdie.

Many legends about Dickens's stay at the King's Head have got into print, such as that he stayed there six weeks, that he wrote a great part of the book there, working hard at a table in front of the window all day, and that he spent the nights in the bar parlour gathering facts from the frequenters. Actually he only remained two nights, and wrote no more of his book there than a few brief notes, in the same way that Phiz made rough pictures in his sketch-book.

It was whilst on this short visit that Dickens made the acquaintance of Mr. Humphrey, who kept a watchmaker's shop lower down the street.



THE KING'S HEAD, BARNARD CASTLE
Photograph by T. W. Tyrrell

THE KING'S HEAD, BARNARD CASTLE

This worthy conducted him to some of the schools in the neighbourhood, and from the friendly association sprang the title of *Master Humphrey's Clock*, used by the novelist for his next serial. When Dickens first met Mr. Humphrey, who we believe was the source from which sprang all the legendary stories about Dickens and Barnard Castle, he exhibited no clock outside his shop. It was not until two years after Dickens's visit that the old man, having moved opposite the inn, placed a clock above the door.

The King's Head in those days was kept by two sisters, who were wont to inform customers that Dickens wrote a good deal of *Nicholas Nickleby* in their house. He was always writing, it was said, and they could show the ink-stand he used during the long stay he made. This is a little exaggeration which reflected glory engenders sometimes.

The inn is of the Georgian period and was built about the middle of the eighteenth century. It is situated in the market place, and the room Dickens occupied is still cared for and exhibited to visitors. The house is practically the same, with its intricate staircases, low ceilings, its old-world atmosphere, and old-fashioned appurtenances.

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

Dotheboys Hall, Squeers's academy, has been identified as being at Bowes, and at the Unicorn Inn there Dickens is said to have met Shaw, the original of Squeers. It was Squeers's custom, we are told, "to drive over to the market town every evening, on pretence of urgent business, and stop till ten or eleven o'clock at a tavern he much affected," and no doubt it was to the Unicorn that he repaired.

This ancient inn stands midway in the village and was at that time the most important inn between York and Carlisle. A dozen or more coaches changed every day in its yard, which was, and still is, with its abundant stabling, one of the largest of the ancient road-side hostelries surviving the old coaching days. It is still unspoiled, and we believe remains much the same as when Dickens and Phiz drew up there and partook of a substantial lunch, and ultimately interviewed the veritable Mr. Shaw, Squeers's prototype.

The next inn carries us a good way into the story and brings us in company with Nicholas and Smike on their tramp to Portsmouth. Chapter XXII of the book describes how these two, having deserted Squeers, sally forth to seek their fortune at the naval port. On the first evening they arrived at Godalming, where they bargained

THE INN ON THE PORTSMOUTH ROAD

for two beds and slept soundly in them. On the second day, they reached the Devil's Punch Bowl, at Hindhead, and Nicholas, having read to SMIKE the inscription upon the stone, together they passed on with steady purpose until they were within twelve miles of Portsmouth, just beyond Petersfield. Here they turned off the path to the door of a road-side inn, where they learned from the landlord that it was not only "twelve long miles" to their destination, but a very bad road. Following the advice of the innkeeper Nicholas decided to stay where he was for the night, and was led into the kitchen. Asked what they would have for supper "Nicholas suggested cold meat, but there was no cold meat—poached eggs, but there were no eggs—mutton chops, but there wasn't a mutton chop within three miles, though there had been more last week than they knew what to do with, and would be an extraordinary supply the day after to-morrow." Nicholas determined to leave the decision entirely to the landlord, who rejoined: "There's a gentleman in the parlour that's ordered a hot beefsteak pudding and potatoes at nine. There's more of it than he can manage, and I have very little doubt that, if I ask leave, you can sup with him. I'll do that in a minute." In spite of Nicholas's disinclination

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to consent to do any such thing, the landlord hurried off and in a few minutes Nicholas was shown into the presence of Mr. Vincent Crummles, who was rehearsing his two sons in "what is called in play-bills a terrific combat" with broadswords.

After the rehearsal was finished Nicholas and Crummles drew round the fire and the conversation revealed the latter's profession and business. The appearance of the beefsteak pudding put a stop to the discussion for the time being; but after Smike and the two young Crummleses had retired for the night Nicholas and Mr. Vincent Crummles continued their conversation over a bowl of punch, which sent forth "a most grateful and inviting fragrance." Under the influence of this stimulant Mr. Vincent Crummles proposed that Nicholas should join his theatrical company.

"There's genteel comedy in your walk and manner, juvenile tragedy in your eye, and touch-and-go farce in your laugh," said Mr. Vincent Crummles. "You'll do as well as if you had thought of nothing else but the lamps from your birth downwards." After further flattery and persuasiveness, Nicholas agreed to try, and without more deliberation declared it was a bargain and gave Mr. Vincent Crummles his hand upon it.

THE BOTTOM INN, PETERSFIELD

Next morning they all continued their journey to Portsmouth in Mr. Vincent Crummles's "four-wheeled phaeton" drawn by his famous pony.

Dickens does not name the inn in which this incident took place, and beyond stating it was twelve miles from Portsmouth gives no other indication helpful in identifying it.



THE BOTTOM INN, NEAR PETERSFIELD

Drawn by C. G. Harper

Mr. Charles G. Harper however says from Dickens's very accurate description there can be no question as to the identical spot the novelist had in mind, which is just below Petersfield. There is an inn, the Coach and Horses, standing by the wayside to-day, but according to Mr. Harper it did not exist at the time of the story,

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so that the inn to which Dickens referred was the Bottom Inn, or Gravel Hill Inn, as it was sometimes called, which stood there in those days, and exists to-day as a gamekeeper's cottage.

There are other inns in the book that are referred to without name and one or two which leave no doubt as to their identity.

The handsome hotel, for instance, where Nicholas accidentally overheard Sir Mulberry Hawk talking familiarly about his sister Kate, was situated, Dickens tells us, in one of the thoroughfares lying between Park Lane and Bond Street. It cannot, however, definitely be identified. It was in one of the boxes of the coffee-room that the incident took place and there were many such hotels at the time in the district whose coffee-rooms were partitioned off into such boxes as Dickens describes this one. It has been suggested that Mivart's, afterwards Claridge's—the old one, not the present building—was possibly the one Dickens meant. It stood in Brook Street and for that reason would perhaps answer the purpose. But this is mere conjecture.

This hotel may also be the one referred to in Chapter XVI of Book II of *Little Dorrit*, where we are told "The courier had not approved of Mr. Dorrit's staying in the house of a friend, and

THE CROWN, GOLDEN SQUARE

had preferred to take him to an hotel in Brook Street, Grosvenor Square." He had just returned from the Continent and remained for a short time only. But it was the scene of two or three momentous interviews with Mr. Merdle, Flora Finching and young John Chivery.

The Crown public-house Newman Noggs used to frequent in the neighbourhood of Golden Square, London, and which he told Nicholas was "at the corner of Silver Street and James Street, with a bar door both ways," has been rebuilt and greatly altered since those days. The names of the streets, too, have been changed to Upper James Street and Beak Street, but at the corner where they meet is to be found a Crown public-house occupying the site of Newman Noggs's favoured house of call.

There is something more definite and real in the London Tavern referred to in the second chapter of the book, where the "United Metropolitan Improved Hot Muffin and Crumpet Baking and Punctual Delivery Company" was to hold its first meeting with Sir Matthew Pupker in the chair, which Company was being floated and engineered by Ralph Nickleby and his fellow conspirator, Mr. Bunney. Arriving in Bishopsgate Street Within, where the London Tavern was,

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

and still is situated, they found it in a great bustle. Half a dozen men were exciting themselves over the announcement of the meeting which was to petition Parliament in favour of the wonderful Company with a capital of five hundred thousand shares of ten pounds each. The two men elbowed their way into a room upstairs containing a business-looking table and several business-looking people. The report of that meeting is too long to quote, but, long as it is, not too long for the reader to relish every word of it if he will but turn again to the pages describing it. After the petition was agreed upon, Mr. Nickleby and the other directors adjourned to the office to lunch, and to remunerate themselves; "for which trouble (as the company was yet in its infancy) they only charged three guineas each man for every such attendance."

The London Tavern where this meeting was held was opened in 1768. It was built on the Tontine principle, the name of the architect one Richard B. Jupp. The great dining-room was known as the "Pillar-room" and was "decorated with medallions and garlands, Corinthian columns and pilasters." It had a ball-room running the whole length of the structure, which was also used for banquets, and was hung with paintings and con-

THE LONDON TAVERN

tained a large organ at one end. In those days the hotel was famous for its turtle soup, the turtles being kept alive in large tanks, and as many as two tons were seen swimming in the vat at one time. The cellars were filled with barrels of porter, pipes of port, butts of sherry, and endless other bottles and bins. The building was erected to provide a spacious and convenient place for public meetings, such as had drawn Ralph Nickleby and his friends on the occasion referred to above.

In *Household Words* in 1852 was a long article on the tavern to which we are indebted for some of the facts here recorded. Meetings of Mexican Bondholders were held on the second floor ; of a Railway Assurance " upstairs, and first to the left " ; of an asylum election at the end of the passage ; and of the party on the " first floor to the right," who had to consider " the union of the Gibleton line of the Great-Trunk-Due-Eastern Junction " ; all these functions brought persons in great excitement and agitation to its hospitable walls.

For these meetings the rooms were arranged with benches, and sumptuously Turkey-carpeted : the end being provided with a long table for the directors, with an imposing array of paper and pens.

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

In a word, it was a city tavern for city men, and it still exists to-day to cater for the requirements of the same class of business men, although perhaps not so ostentatiously. Banquets are still held there; city companies hold their meetings there, and Masonic institutions their lodges.

Dickens knew the tavern very well, having given dinners there himself or taken the chair for some fund, as he did in June 1844, in aid of the "Sanatorium or Sick-house," an institution for students, governesses and young artists who were above using hospitals and could not afford the expenses of home-nursing in their lodgings.

On another occasion (in 1851) Dickens presided there at the annual dinner held in aid of the General Theatrical Fund. The thought of this dinner may have come back to him when he was writing one of his short pieces entitled "Lying Awake," (1852) in which, among the strange things which came to his mind on those occasions, he mentions that he found himself once thinking how he had "suffered unspeakable agitation of mind from taking the chair at a public dinner at the London Tavern in my night clothes, which not all the courtesy of my kind friend and host, Mr. Bathe, could persuade me were quite adapted to the occasion."

THE LONDON TAVERN

There are a few other inns not mentioned by name, or merely alluded to in passing, which, together with those we have dealt with, make *Nicholas Nickleby* almost as interesting from this point of view as *Pickwick Papers*.

CHAPTER V

BARNABY RUDGE

THE MAYPOLE, CHIGWELL

OF all the inns with which Dickens's books abound there is none that plays so important a part in any of his stories as the Maypole at Chigwell does in *Barnaby Rudge*. Other inns are just the scene of an incident or two, or are associated with certain characters or groups of characters ; the Maypole is the actual pivot upon which the whole story of *Barnaby Rudge* revolves. It is associated in some way with every character that figures prominently in the narrative, and scene after scene is enacted either in it or near by. The story begins with a picturesque description of the inn and its frequenters, and ends with a delightful pen-picture of young Joe Willet comfortably settled there with Dolly as his wife, and a happy family growing up around them.

For these reasons it may therefore be said to

THE MAYPOLE, CHIGWELL

be the most important of all the Dickensian inns. It is also one of the few hostels Dickens describes in detail, and perhaps the only one he admittedly gave a fanciful name to, for its real name is the King's Head. Ever since it has been an inn it has been so called, and is known by that name to-day, although it is never referred to in conversation or print without the corroborative appendage of "The Maypole of *Barnaby Rudge*," nor does the sign-board omit this important fact. There are the remains of an inn near by at Chigwell Row, boasting the sign of the Maypole, and this may have suggested the name to Dickens, but that is all it can claim: the King's Head is the inn and Chigwell is the place chosen by Dickens for the centre of some of the chief scenes in his story, and the few fanciful touches he gives to it and its surroundings are nothing but the licence allowed a novelist for rounding off and completing the details necessary for the presentment of his ideal. As long as the King's Head exists, therefore, it will always remain famous as "the Maypole of *Barnaby Rudge*," and reflect pleasant memories to all who know the book.

In 1841 Dickens, writing to his friend and biographer, John Forster, inviting him to take a trip to Chigwell, said: "Chigwell, my dear fellow, is

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the greatest place in the world. Name your day for going. Such a delicious old inn, opposite the churchyard—such a lovely ride—such beautiful forest scenery—such an out-of-the-way, rural, place—such a sexton ! I say again name your day.” In quoting this alluring invitation in his biography of the novelist, John Forster adds : “The day was named at once, and the whitest of stones marks it, in now sorrowful memory. Dickens’s promise was exceeded by our enjoyment ; and his delight in the double recognition of himself and of Barnaby, by the landlord of the nice old inn, far exceeded any pride he would have taken in what the world thinks the highest sort of honour.”

As *Barnaby Rudge* had been published by this time, the novelist must have made many a trip to the King’s Head previously, for the early chapters of the story in which the inn is introduced had been written long before.

Time has played very few tricks either with the building or with Chigwell, for they are practically the same to-day as they were at the period in which Dickens was writing. The inn can still be said to be a delicious old one, and, if one rides to it as Dickens did, his description of the forest scenery and the nature of the out-of-the-way, rural

THE MAYPOLE, CHIGWELL

place will be found as true to-day as when he discovered it, nearly a century ago : facts which many a pilgrim to it since can substantiate.

The description of the Maypole in the opening chapter of *Barnaby Rudge* has been quoted often,



THE KING'S HEAD, CHIGWELL

Drawn by L. Walker

but we make no apology for quoting it again, for no more enticing way of introducing it could be imagined. Besides which it incidentally suggests its past history as well as affirms its present picturesqueness :

“ The Maypole was an old building, with more

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gable ends than a lazy man would care to count on a sunny day ; huge zigzag chimneys, out of which it seemed as though even smoke could not choose but come in more than naturally fantastic shapes, imparted to it in its tortuous progress ; and vast stables, gloomy, ruinous, and empty. The place was said to have been built in the days of King Henry the Eighth ; and there was a legend, not only that Queen Elizabeth had slept there one night while upon a hunting excursion, to wit, in a certain oak-panelled room with a deep bay window, but that next morning, while standing on a mounting-block before the door, with one foot in the stirrup, the Virgin Monarch had then and there boxed and cuffed an unlucky page for some neglect of duty. . . . Whether these, and many other stories of the like nature, were true or untrue, the Maypole was really an old house, a very old house, perhaps as old as it claimed to be, and perhaps older, which will sometimes happen with houses of an uncertain, as with ladies of a certain, age. Its windows were old diamond-pane lattices, its floors were sunken and uneven, its ceilings blacked by the hand of Time, and heavy with massive beams. Over the doorway was an ancient porch, quaintly and grotesquely carved ; and here on Summer even-

THE MAYPOLE, CHIGWELL

ings the more favoured customers smoked and drank—aye, and sang many a good song, too, sometimes—reposing in two grim-looking high-backed settles, which, like the twin dragons of some fairy tale, guarded the entrance to the mansion. In the chimneys of the disused rooms swallows had built their nests for many a long year, and, from earliest Spring to latest Autumn, whole colonies of sparrows chirped and twittered in the eaves. There were more pigeons about the dreary stable-yard and outbuildings than anybody but the landlord could reckon up. The wheeling and circling flights of runts, fantails, tumblers and pouters were perhaps not quite consistent with the grave and sober character of the building, but the monotonous cooing, which never ceased to be raised by some among them all day long, suited it exactly, and seemed to lull it to rest.

“With its overhanging stories, drowsy little panes of glass, and front bulging out and projecting over the pathway, the old house looked as if it were nodding in its sleep. Indeed, it needed no great stretch of fancy to detect in it other resemblances to humanity. The bricks of which it was built had originally been a deep dark red, but had grown yellow and discoloured like an old man’s

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skin ; the sturdy timbers had decayed like teeth ; and here and there the ivy, like a warm garment to comfort it in its age, wrapt its green leaves closely round the time-worn walls."

That is a charming pen-picture of the Maypole's outward appearance, and beyond a little exaggeration as regards some details almost perfectly fits the "delicious" old inn to-day. Some topographers have seen fit to quarrel with the picture because the porch was never there as described by Dickens and because the gable ends could easily be counted without trouble, and because in their hurried visit they had failed to discover the old bricks and the warm garment of ivy wrapping its green leaves closely round the time-worn walls. But that is being meticulous, not to say pedantic, and if a visit is made to the back of the building this delightful simile can be thoroughly appreciated. Indeed, no more appropriate words could be found to describe its appearance to-day than those written by the novelist many years ago.

Cattermole, who drew a picture of the inn for the book, went woefully wrong. He did not even follow Dickens's words, but drew a picture more representing an old English baronial mansion than an inn. Even granting that, before the Maypole

THE MAYPOLE, CHIGWELL

was an inn it was a mansion, Cattermole very much overstepped the mark. History tells us that about 1713 the King's Head was used for sittings of the Court of Attachments, and that farther back in 1630 "the Bailiff of the Forests was directed to summon the Constables to appear before the Forest Officers, for the purposes of an election," at the "house of Bibby," which probably was no other than what became the King's Head at Chigwell. "In this quaint and pleasant inn," we are informed, "may still be seen the room in which the Court of Attachments was held." This evidently is the Chester Room to which we shall refer later. The same writer also mentions "an arched recess in the cellar, made to hold the wine which served for the revels of the Officers of the Forest, after the graver labours of the day."

Let us follow the story of *Barnaby Rudge* through, and see how everything in it focusses on the Maypole Inn.

The story dates back to 1775, and opens with John Willet, the burly large-headed landlord with a fat face, sitting in his old seat in the chimney-corner before a blazing fire surrounded by the group of regular habitués. Here this company assembled each night in the recess of the huge

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

wide chimney with their long clay pipes and tankards to discuss the local history and events. Here Solomon Daisy told his Maypole story. "It belongs to the house," says John Willet, "and nobody but Solomon Daisy has ever told it under this roof, or ever shall, that's more." This room, long since turned to the more modern use of an up-to-date kitchen, was the scene of many an incident in the book. Its cosy chimney-corner and high-back settles are no more, but the scene can be adjusted easily, even though a gas stove stultifies the vision somewhat. It was the resort of all and sundry in those days. Gabriel Varden credited himself with great resolution if he took another road on his way back from the Warren in order that he should not break his promise to Martha by looking in at the Maypole.

It was a bold resolution, for the Maypole was as a magnet, and we are often told of how its cheery lights in the evenings were a lure to those within sight of them; for when Gabriel did go, as related on one occasion, and left the door open behind him, there was disclosed "a delicious perspective of warmth and brightness—when the ruddy gleam of the fire, streaming through the old red curtains of the common room, seemed to bring with it, as part of itself, a pleasant hum of

THE MAYPOLE, CHIGWELL

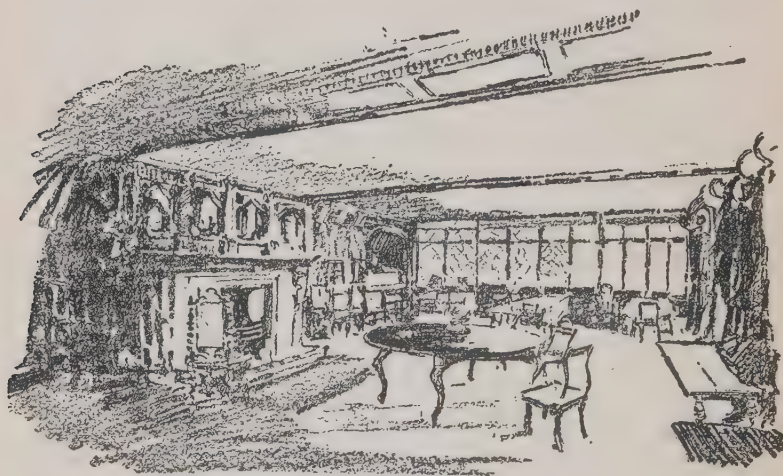
voices, and a fragrant odour of steaming grog and rare tobacco, all steeped, as it were, in the cheerful glow." There he would find a company in snug seats in the snuggest of corners round a broad glare from a crackling log, and from a distant kitchen he would hear a gentle sound of frying, with musical clatter of plates and dishes, and a savoury smell that made even the boisterous wind a perfume—on such occasions Gabriel, we are told, would find his "firmness oozing rapidly away. He tried to look stoically at the tavern, but his features would relax into a look of fondness. He turned his head the other way, and the cold black country seemed to frown him off, and to drive him for a refuge into its hospitable arms."

We can well imagine it, for who could resist its clean floor covered with crisp white sand, its well-swept hearth, its blazing fire, such as this friendly meeting place possessed? That was but one of its many attractive rooms.

Up the "wide dismantled staircase" was the best apartment, in which John Chester had his momentous interview with Geoffrey Haredale. This is known to-day, as we have already said, as the Chester Room. "It was spacious enough in all conscience, occupying the whole depth of the house, and having at either end a great bay

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window, as large as many modern rooms . . . although the best room in the inn, it had the melancholy aspect of grandeur in decay, and was much too vast for comfort." This room exists to-day, and one can readily realise, on reading



THE CHESTER ROOM

Drawn by L. Walker

Dickens's meditation on its dullness and its chilly waste, how desolate it must have been as a living-room in a mansion, such as the Maypole once was. "God help the man whose heart ever changes with the world, as an old mansion when it becomes an inn," Dickens exclaims.

The best bedroom to which Mr. Chester repaired for the night after his interview with Mr. Haredale

THE MAYPOLE, CHIGWELL

was nearly as large and possessed "a great spectral bedstead, hung with faded brocade, and ornamented, at the top of each carved post, with a plume of feathers that had once been white, but with dust and age had now grown hearse-like and funereal"; but the room, John Willet informed his guest, was "as warm as a toast in a tankard." And so Mr. Chester was left to his rest in the Maypole's ancient bed.

These apartments, stately and grand as they were, could not compare or compete in comfort with the bar, the bar parlour and other corners frequented by the more menial coterie of the inn. Even the stables were pleasant in their way, and, when Hugh, the ostler—Maypole Hugh as he was called—was ordered to take Mr. Chester's horse, John Willet assured his guest that "there's good accommodation for man and beast," which was true then and is true to-day.

Later came Lord George Gordon, John Grueby and Mr. Gashford on their "No Popery" mission, all looking like "tagrag and bobtail, asking if there are any inns thereabouts. "There are no inns," replied Mr. Willet, with strong emphasis on the plural number; "but there's a inn—one inn—the Maypole Inn. That's a inn indeed. You won't see the like of that inn often." After being

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assured that his visitors were really the persons they represented themselves to be, John Willet recovered so far as to observe that there was ample accommodation at the Maypole for the party ; “ good beds, neat wines, excellent entertainment for man and beast ; private rooms for large and small parties ; dinners dressed upon the shortest notice ; choice stabling, and a lock-up coach-house ; and, in short, to run over such commendatory scraps of language as were painted up on various portions of the building, and which in the course of forty years he had learnt to repeat with tolerable correctness.” And so they were “ put up ” for the night, and they could desire nothing better.

Without following the story in its relation to the horrors of the Gordon Riots, we record in passing that both Maypole Hugh and Barnaby joined the throng on leaving their cosy quarters of the inn.

Passing over the frequent visits of such characters as Mr., Mrs. and Dolly Varden, Miss Haredale and others, we reach the stage in the story when the rioters arrived at the inn on their way to burn and raid the Warren in the neighbourhood. They encounter John Willet at the Porch, and immediately demand drink.

THE MAYPOLE, CHIGWELL

Their ringleader was no other than Maypole Hugh, who confronted his late master with "These lads are thirsty and must drink. Bustle, Jack, bustle! Show us the best—the very best—the over-proof that you keep for your own drinking, Jack!" Then ensued a mad scene. The rabble entered the bar—"the sanctuary, the mystery, the hallowed ground: here it was, crammed with men, clubs, sticks, torches, pistols; filled with a deafening noise, oaths, shouts, screams, hootings; changed all at once into a bear-garden, a mad-house, an infernal temple; men darting in and out, by door and window, smashing the glass, turning the taps, drinking liquor out of china punch-bowls, sitting astride of casks, smoking private and personal pipes, cutting down the sacred grove of lemons, hacking and hewing of the celebrated cheese . . . noise, smoke, light, darkness, frolic, anger, laughter, groans, plunder, fear, and ruin." Finally binding John to a chair they left him alone in his dismantled bar and made for the Warren, which they burned to the ground.

In despair, Mr. Haredale seeks his niece and servants at the Maypole, only to find the spectacle of John Willet in the ignominious position the rioters left him, with his favourite house stripped and pulled about his ears. Damaged as the

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“ Maypole ” was in many ways, it never actually drops out of the story’s interest ; but during the trend of events in London we naturally hear little of it.

John Willet had flown in despair from it, and took up his abode in the Black Lion in London for safety’s sake, where eventually he again met his son Joe, now a one-armed hero back from the wars.

Here in his solitude we find him sitting over the fire, “ afar off in the remotest depths of his intellect,” with a lurking hint or faint suggestion “ that out of the public purse there might issue funds for the restoration of the Maypole to its former high place among the taverns of the earth.” What actually did happen, however, was the marriage of his son Joe to Dolly, whose father gave her a handsome dowry, enabling the happy couple to return to the Maypole, reopen it, and there install themselves as host and hostess. And so they brought back to the inn all its famous glory, earning for it the epithet that there was no such country inn as the Maypole in all England.

Barnaby returned to live with his mother on the farm established there, and Grip was his cherished companion throughout the rest of his life. John Willet retired into a small cottage in

THE MAYPOLE, CHIGWELL

the village, where the fire-place was widened and enlarged for him, and where a boiler was hung up for his edification, and, furthermore, in the little garden outside the front door a fictitious Maypole was planted ; so that he was quite at home directly. To this new abode came his old friends and cronies of the old chimney-corner of the Maypole to chum over the things that once were.

No doubt they talked of the old days in the old inn, and occasionally turned in to its enticing haven and challenged anyone to find its equal by asking, as was asked before, "What carpet like its crunching sand, what merry music as its crackling logs, what perfume like its kitchen's dainty breath, what weather genial as its hearty warmth?" And we are sure that they all endorsed its historian's benediction—"Blessings on the old house, how sturdily it stood."

We have attempted to bring to mind the atmosphere of the Maypole as it was in the days of the story of *Barnaby Rudge*, and to recall the characters and incidents associated with it. The pilgrim to this notable Dickens shrine to-day, remembering these things, will find that time has dealt kindly with the old inn. It is changed, of course, in many ways, but it is still the old Maypole, with

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

its bar, its Chester room, its stables, its cellars running under the adjoining cottages, and its ivy still clinging to the old worn bricks at the back. Its windows are still diamond-paned, and its floors are still uneven and sunken in places ; its heavy beams run across the ceiling. One can even hear the sparrows chirp and see the other birds disport themselves in their revels. The building has many gables, and its stories overhang and bulge over the pathway as if the old house was nodding in its sleep just as the novelist described it.

And, in the churchyard opposite, the scene of Barnaby and his mother sitting upon a tombstone and eating their frugal meal can easily be visualized.

Still set in a rural and beautiful district of England's verdant lanes, long may the Maypole survive !

It is interesting to note that in 1899 "The Charles Dickens Lodge" was consecrated in the Maypole, and still holds its meetings there. The Lodge is held in what was undoubtedly the "best bedroom" of the inn, and the banquet follows in the Chester Room.

CHAPTER VI

BARNABY RUDGE (*continued*) AND THE OLD CURIOSITY SHOP

THE BOOT—THE BLACK LION—THE CROOKED
BILLET—THE RED LION, BEVIS MARKS—GRAY'S
INN COFFEE-HOUSE—AND OTHERS

THERE are very few instances in Dickens's descriptions of London that were not the outcome of his own actual observations. But in writing *Barnaby Rudge*, the action of which took place thirty years or so before he was born, he was forced to rely a good deal on tradition and history books. Yet, so particular was he about facts and details, it would be very difficult to find him tripping even in his geography.

In regard to the inns and taverns of the book, we find, as we have shown, how intimately he knew the Maypole, and we believe it to be true, although in a lesser degree, in regard to the Boot,

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the headquarters of the Gordon Rioters, which, next to the Maypole, is the most notable inn in the book. Having lived in the neighbourhood where for over a century and a half this old inn or its predecessors stood, he no doubt visited it and absorbed the atmosphere of its past.

It is first mentioned in Chapter XXXVIII, where we are told that, after being enrolled as "No Popery" men, Dennis and Hugh left Gashford's house together and spent two hours in inspecting the Houses of Parliament and their purlieus. "As they were thirsty by this time, Dennis proposed that they should repair together to the Boot, where there was good company and strong liquor. Hugh yielding a ready assent, they bent their steps that way with no loss of time."

The Boot, we are told, was "a lone house of public entertainment, situated in the fields at the back of the Foundling Hospital; a very solitary spot at that period, and quite deserted after dark. The tavern stood at some distance from any high road, and was approached only by a dark and narrow lane; so that Hugh was much surprised to find several people drinking there, and great merriment going on."

Here it was that Sim Tappertit, as chief or captain of the United Bulldogs, swaggered about



The Old Boot Inn. 1780.
From an old Engraving

THE BOOT TAVERN

with majestic air, among his fellow conspirators, creating a great impression by his dignity and assumed demeanour of importance, whilst plots and acts of menace were hatched out. In those days the fields were known as Lamb Conduit Fields, which district has become now a very thickly populated neighbourhood between Euston Road and Gray's Inn Road, with the name still perpetuated in Lambs Conduit Street. There is a Boot Tavern still standing to-day at 116 Cromer Street, and there is no reason to doubt that it is the successor of the Boot mentioned in *Barnaby Rudge* as the headquarters of the Gordon Rioters, which actually stood at that spot in 1780. Situated as it was then, the solitary surroundings became a refuge at night for rioters in lanes, under the hay-stacks, or near the warmth of brick-kilns, when they were not in the tavern planning desperate deeds in the name of the Protestant Association of England, sanctioned by Lord George Gordon. The present Boot was rebuilt in 1801 by Peter Speedy, and five generations of the family have owned it for something like 150 years. Even as far back as 1630 we learn that a Thomas Cleave invested £50 in the Boot Tavern, the interest on which was to be spent weekly on thirteen penny loaves,

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

to be distributed to the poor at the door of St. Pancras' Church every Sunday morning.

Among the original illustrations to the book is one of the Boot engraved from a drawing by George Cattermole, who made it from a contemporary etching, which we reproduce here. In comparing it with Cattermole's picture it will be observed that it differs very slightly in detail, but is turned the other way round. This, no doubt, is accounted for by the fact that the drawing was made on wood and when engraved and printed the picture became reversed. The stream running in front of the inn is the Fleet, which still flows underground.

A correspondent in *The Times* on the 25th October, 1895, writing on the subject said that Dickens confirmed to him with his own lips in the Boot itself about the year 1867 "that this was the identical inn he had in his mind's eye when he conceived *Barnaby Rudge*."

Unhappily the frontage has been aggressively modernised. Luckily the present landlord, Mr. Harry Ford, has retained the sign of "Ye Olde Boote" and is proud of the tavern's traditions.

The three or four other inns of the book do not figure so realistically in it as do the Maypole and the Boot. The half-way house between Chigwell

THE BLACK LION, WHITECHAPEL
and London referred to in Chapter II, although unnamed, was no doubt the Green Man at Leytonstone, still standing near the present-day railway station.

The Black Lion in Whitechapel, where Joe Willet took his frugal dinner after having settled his father's bills with the vintner in Thames Street, and where on another occasion, having determined to enlist in the Army, he met the recruiting sergeant, may have existed in those days, but that cannot be determined definitely. There certainly was a Black Lion Yard there, and maybe, at one time, an inn of that name stood close by, exhibiting the sign, which, we are told, was painted by the artist under instructions from the landlord "to convey into the features of the lordly brute whose effigy it bore as near a counterpart of his own face as his skill could compass." The result was "rather a drowsy, tame and feeble lion ; and as these social representatives of a savage class are usually of a conventional character (being depicted, for the most part, in impossible attitudes, and of unearthly colour) he was frequently supposed by the most ignorant and uninformed among the neighbours to be the veritable portrait of the host as he appeared on the occasion of some great funeral ceremony or public mourning."

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This inn was the scene too of the meeting of Dolly Varden and Joe when the valiant soldier returned from the defence of the "Salwanners" minus an arm ; and of the interview of the youthful couple when they came to that very pleasant understanding, after an enjoyable supper.

The Crooked Billet, the headquarters of the recruiting sergeant, where Joe, "disconsolate and downhearted, but full of courage," was enrolled "among the gallant defenders of his native land," was in Tower Street, so we are told ; and we read that, having taken the King's shilling, he was "regaled with a steaming supper of boiled tripe and onions, prepared, as his friend assured him more than once, at the express command of his **Most Sacred Majesty the King.**" After he had done ample justice to it he was "conducted to a straw mattress in a loft over the stable, and locked in there for the night."

Until 1912 there actually was an old weather-beaten public-house with that name at No. 1 Little Tower Hill, at the corner of Shorter Street. It was a very fine specimen of eighteenth-century architecture, although the frontage was not as old as the rest of the structure. As it would have been standing at the period of the story, no doubt this was the house Dickens had in mind.

QUILP'S FAVOURITE TAVERN

It was demolished, with other buildings, to conform to the necessity of city improvements.

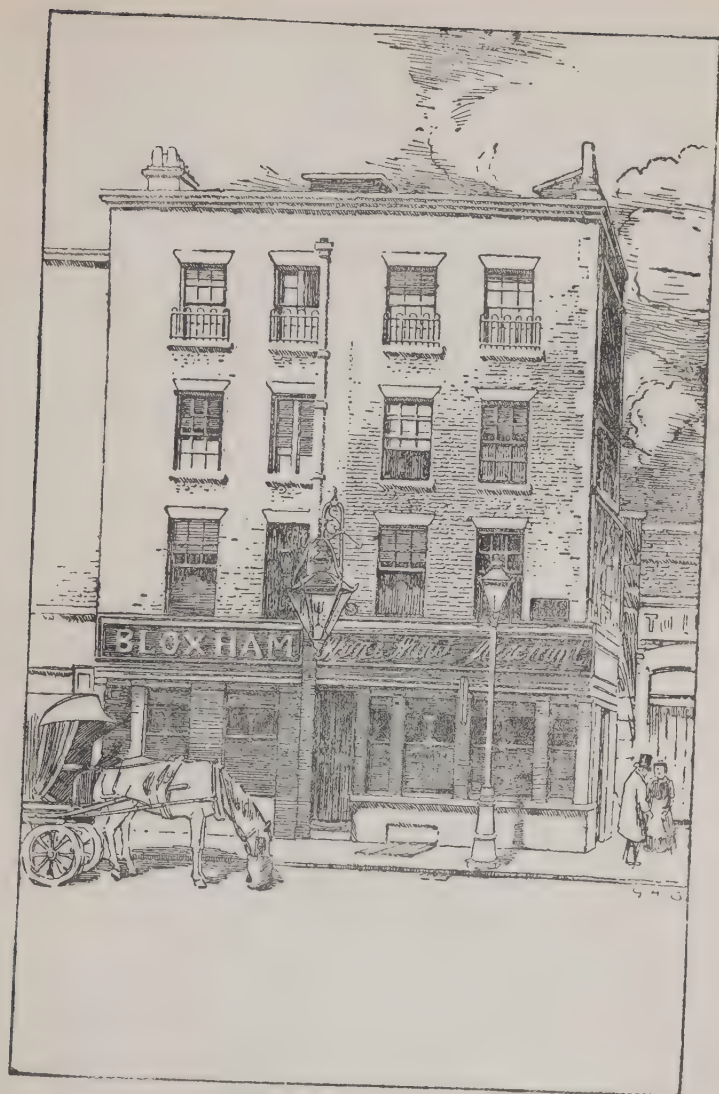
The noted coffee-house in Covent Garden to which Mr. Chester repaired after leaving the locksmith's might be any one of the many that flourished in that district at the time, such as "Tom's," "White's," "Wills's," and "Button's." "Tom's" was perhaps the most fashionable, and for that reason more likely to be favoured by Mr. Chester, as he would be only too proud to think he would be numbered among such folk as Dr. Johnson, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Garrick, Defoe, and all those famous men who resorted to it in its palmy days. It was situated at No. 17 Russell Street.

Turning to *The Old Curiosity Shop*, we can find but few inns or taverns that have any real importance to the story. Of those that are mentioned by name, no detailed description is given, nor is any very vital incident or character associated with them.

In Chapter XXI, however, where Quilp invites Dick Swiveller to partake of liquid refreshment with him, we get the real Dickens touch: "As we are companions in adversity," he said, "shall we be companions in the surest way of forgetting it? If you had no particular business, now, to lead

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

you in another direction, there is a house by the waterside where they have some of the noblest Schiedam—reputed to be smuggled, but that’s between ourselves—that can be got in all the world. The landlord knows me. There’s a little summer-house overlooking the river where we might take a glass of this delicious liquor with a whiff of the best tobacco . . . and be perfectly happy, could we possibly contrive it ; or is there any particular engagement that peremptorily takes you another way, Mr. Swiveller, eh ? ” There remained nothing more to be done but to set out for the house in question. The summer-house of which Mr. Quilp had spoken was “ a rugged wooden box, rotten and bare to see, which overhung the river’s mud and threatened to slide down into it. The tavern to which it belonged was a crazy building, sapped and undermined by the rats, and only upheld by the bars of wood which were reared against its walls, and had propped it up so long that even they were decaying and yielding with their load, and of a windy night might be heard to creak and crack as if the whole fabric were about to come toppling down. The house stood—if anything so old and feeble could be said to stand—on a piece of waste ground, blighted with the unwholesome smoke of factory



THE RED LION, BEVIS MARKS
Drawn by G. M. Brimelow

THE RED LION, BEVIS MARKS

chimneys. . . . Its internal accommodation amply fulfilled the promise of the outside. The rooms were low and damp, the clammy walls were pierced with chinks and holes, the rotten floors had sunk from their level, the very beams started from their place and warned the timid stranger from their neighbourhood."

Dickens gives no name to this tavern so minutely and wonderfully described, where Quilp and Dick drank with so much freedom. Yet, although it cannot be identified, the word-picture is too good to pass unheeded. However, many years ago there were scores of such which would answer to the description, on the Surrey side of the Thames, and no doubt Dickens hit upon one of them for Quilp's favourite resort near by his wharf. They have long since disappeared.

No sign is mentioned either of Dick Swiveller's favourite inn "across the street," from Sampson Brass's office in Bevis Marks, where he obtained his "modest quencher." There is, however, at No. 17, the Red Lion Tavern that claims that honour and acquaints the world of the fact from its sign-board. It is quite an old-fashioned public-house, and has scarcely been altered since it numbered so bright and merry a soul as Dick among its frequenters.

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

There is, however, one tavern mentioned in the story that leaves us in no doubt about its identification. It will be remembered how annoyed, indeed how desperate, Sampson Brass gets with the Single Gentleman for encouraging the Punch and Judy shows to the house. "I wish I only knew who his friends were," muttered Sampson, as another appeared in Bevis Marks. "If they'd just get up a pretty little commission *de lunatico* at the Gray's Inn Coffee-House and give me the job, I'd be content to have the lodgings empty for awhile, at all events."

The building which was once known as Gray's Inn Coffee-House stands to-day, although its front has been stuccoed and turned into chambers. It is the next house on the east from the Holborn gate of Gray's Inn. It is referred to at length in Chapter LIX of *David Copperfield*, when David, reaching London, plans to call on Traddles in his chambers in the Inn. He puts up at Gray's Inn Coffee-House. Having ordered a bit of fish and a steak he stood before the fire musing on the waiter's obscurity :

"As I followed the chief waiter with my eyes, I could not help thinking that the garden in which he had gradually blown to be the flower he was was an arduous place to rise in. It had such a

GRAY'S INN COFFEE-HOUSE

prescriptive, stiff-necked, long-established, solemn, elderly air. I glanced about the room, which had had its sanded floor sanded, no doubt, in exactly the same manner when the chief waiter was a boy, if he ever was a boy, which appeared to be improbable ; and at the shining tables, where I saw myself reflected, in unruffled depths of old mahogany ; and at the lamps, without a flaw in their trimmings or cleaning ; and at the comfortable green curtains, with their pure brass rods, snugly enclosing the boxes ; and at the two large coal fires, brightly burning ; and at the rows of decanters, burly as if with the consciousness of pipes of expensive old port wine below ; and both England and the law appeared to me to be very difficult indeed to be taken by storm. I went up to my bedroom to change my wet clothes ; and the vast extent of that old wainscoted apartment (which was over the archway leading to the inn, I remember) and the sedate immensity of the four-post bedstead, and the indomitable gravity of the chests of drawers, all seemed to unite in sternly frowning on the fortunes of Traddles, or on any such daring youth. I came down again to my dinner ; and even the slow comfort of the meal, and the orderly silence of the place, were eloquent on the audacity of Traddles, and his

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

small hopes of a livehihood for twenty years to come.”

We wonder if the staid men who conduct their business in those rooms to-day are conscious that they occupy one of London's historic old coffee-taverns and a noted Dickens landmark to wit.

The Jolly Sandboys Inn, mentioned at the beginning of Chapter XVIII of *The Old Curiosity Shop*, is doubtless a purely imaginary one. It was “a small road-side inn of pretty ancient date, with a sign representing three sandboys increasing their jollity with as many jugs of ale and bags of gold, creaking and swinging on its post on the opposite side of the road.” But, as we have no definite information as to the identical spot Codlin and Short had reached at that moment, no attempt can be made to identify it.

The same remarks apply to the Valiant Soldier, the public-house where Nell and her grandfather took shelter from the storm, in Chapter XXIX, and where the old man gambled away Nell's last coin in a game of cards.

CHAPTER VII

MARTIN CHUZZLEWIT

THE BLUE DRAGON—THE HALF MOON AND SEVEN
STARS -- TWO SALISBURY INNS -- THE BLACK BULL,
HOLBORN

THE Blue Dragon is an inn whose name, through the magic pen of Dickens, has become as familiar as that of the veritable Pecksniff himself, and almost as important. Dickens found evident delight in describing it and its beaming mistress, Mrs. Lupin, but was careful not to disclose its real whereabouts beyond saying that it was located in a "little Wiltshire village within easy journey of the fair old town of Salisbury." It is first introduced in Chapter II of *Martin Chuzzlewit* in that wonderful description of an angry wind, which, among the other extraordinary and wilful antics it indulged in, gave "the old sign before the ale-house door such a

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

cuff as it went that the Blue Dragon was more rampant than usual ever afterwards." In the following chapter we are allowed to become more intimate with this sign and learn what "a faded, and an ancient dragon he was ; and many a wintry storm of rain, snow, sleet, and hail had changed his colour from a gaudy blue to a faint lack-lustre of grey. But there he hung ; rearing, in a state of monstrous imbecility, on his hind legs ; waxing, with every month that passed, so much more dim and shapeless that as you gazed at him on one side of the sign-board it seemed as if he must be gradually melting through it, and coming out upon the other. He was a courteous and considerate dragon, too ; or had been in his distincter days ; for in the midst of his rampant feebleness he kept one of his fore paws near his nose, as though he would say, ' Don't mind me—it's only my fun ' ; while he held out the other in polite and hospitable entreaty."

No less delightful is Dickens's picture of the mistress of the Blue Dragon, who "was in outward appearance just what a landlady should be : broad, buxom, comfortable and good-looking, with a face of clear red and white, which, by its jovial aspect, at once bore testimony to her hearty participation in the good things of the

THE BLUE DRAGON

larder and cellar, and to their thriving and healthful influences. She was a widow, but years ago had passed through her state of weeds, and burst into flower again—and in full bloom she had continued ever since ; and in full bloom she was now ; with roses in her ample skirts, and roses on her bodice, roses in her cap, roses in her cheeks—aye, and roses, worth the gathering too, on her lips for that matter . . . was comely, dimpled plump, and tight as a gooseberry.”

To this inn and the care of its jovial landlady unexpectedly came old Martin Chuzzlewit and Mary Graham in a rusty old chariot with post-horses. The old man, suffering horrible cramps and spasms, was accommodated in the best bedroom, “ which was a large apartment, such as one may see in country places, with a low roof and a sunken flooring, all downhill from the door, and a descent of two steps on the inside so exquisitely unexpected that strangers, despite the most elaborate cautioning, usually dived in head first, as into a plunging bath. It was none of your frivolous and preposterously bright bedrooms, where nobody can close an eye with any kind of propriety or decent regard to the association of ideas ; but it was a good, dull leaden drowsy place, where every article of furniture reminded

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

you that you came there to sleep, and that you were 'expected to go to sleep.'"

Here old Martin was put to bed in the old curtained four-poster, and was soon discovered by Mr. Hypocrite Pecksniff, who knew the Blue Dragon and its bar well and had come in from his house not far away. In short time followed the other relatives until all the beds in the inn and village were at a premium. These relatives included Mr. and Mrs. Spottletoe, Anthony Chuzzlewit and his son Jonas, the widow of a deceased brother and her two daughters, a grand-nephew, George Chuzzlewit, all of whom we assume slept at the inn; whilst Montague Tigg and Chevy Slime put up at the Half Moon and Seven Stars, where they ran up a bill they could not pay and so tried the Blue Dragon. The King's Arms in the village was no doubt the original of the Half Moon and Seven Stars.

Throughout the first portion of the book the Blue Dragon is the meeting place of many of the characters, with Mrs. Lupin the friend of most of them. Therefore within its walls many scenes and incidents of the story take place, apart from the visits of old Martin and Mary Graham.

One of its chief claims to affection, however, is its intimate association with Mark Tapley, the

THE BLUE DRAGON

ostler there, and his attraction to Mrs. Lupin, in connection with which we need only recall the scene on the night of his departure for America and that on his ultimate and unexpected return.

On this latter occasion he arrived at the Blue Dragon wet through and found Mrs. Lupin alone in the bar. Wrapped up in his great coat, she did not know him at first, but soon recognised him as he vigorously caught her in his arms and showered kisses upon her. He excused his final burst by saying "I ain't a-kissing you now, you'll observe. I have been among the patriots: I'm kissing my country." This exuberance ultimately led to the marriage of Mark to the buxom widow and the conversion of the sign of the Blue Dragon into that of the Jolly Tapley, a sign, Mark assured us, of his own invention: "Wery new, conwivial and expressive."

And so with such a warm-hearted and homely couple to guide the fortunes of the Blue Dragon, we may assume that its comfort and hospitality continued to be a byword in the village and surrounding country.

The Blue Dragon has been carefully identified as the George Inn at Amesbury, eight miles north of Salisbury, and not far from Mr. Pecksniff's

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

house, for which an old mansion on the Wilsford Road near the village is made to stand.

It is true that at Alderbury there is a Green Dragon, and, although it may reasonably be assumed that Dickens knew of this and appropriated the sign and changed its colour, he did not otherwise adopt the inn for the scene of those incidents we have referred to, for it was not commodious enough for the purpose. Whereas the George at Amesbury fulfils all the requirements of the story and was at the time a coaching inn and a hostelry capable of supplying all the wants and all the accommodation demanded by old Martin Chuzzlewit and the retinue that pursued him wherever he went.

H. Snowden Ward, who made a minute study of this district in relation to the Blue Dragon, became convinced by means of ordnance maps and coach routes that Amesbury answered in every detail the requirements of the little Wiltshire village described by Dickens. He found that the turnpike house where Tom Pinch left his box still existed, and the church where he played the organ was rightly situated, and, though there was no walk through the wood from the house selected as Pecksniff's, there was a path through a little plantation making a

THE BLUE DRAGON

short cut to the north-west corner of the church-yard.

Amesbury also fits geographically into the story in regard to the route of the London coach which carried Tom Pinch and others on their



THE GEORGE, AMESBURY
Drawn by O. G. Harper

journeys to London, and the George Inn still stands a famous Dickens landmark there, where visitors can be shown the identical bedroom occupied by old Martin Chuzzlewit, and where they can otherwise indulge the sentiment of being

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

in the Blue Dragon once presided over by the very attractive, comely and dimpled Mrs. Lupin when in her bloom, and utterly ignore the disparagement and contempt poured upon it by that unprincipled adventurer, Montague Tigg.

Leaving the "little Wiltshire village" with as much reluctance as Mark Tapley did on one occasion, let us visit the "fair old town of Salisbury" in the company of Tom Pinch, who, it will be remembered, was commissioned to drive there to meet and bring back Martin Chuzzlewit, the new pupil. Mr. Pecksniff's horse, which resembled, it was said, his own moral character in so far that "he was full of promise, but of no performance," was harnessed to the hooded vehicle—"it was more like a gig with a tumour than anything else"—and simple-hearted Tom, with his gallant equipage, pursued his way to the cathedral town, which he had a shrewd notion was a very desperate sort of place. Having put up his horse at an inn and given the hostler to understand that he would look in again in the course of an hour or two to see it take its corn, he set forth to view the streets. Salisbury was noted for its inns then, and the day being market day—still a notable sight to-day—he watched the farmers standing about in groups on the tavern

THE GEORGE, SALISBURY

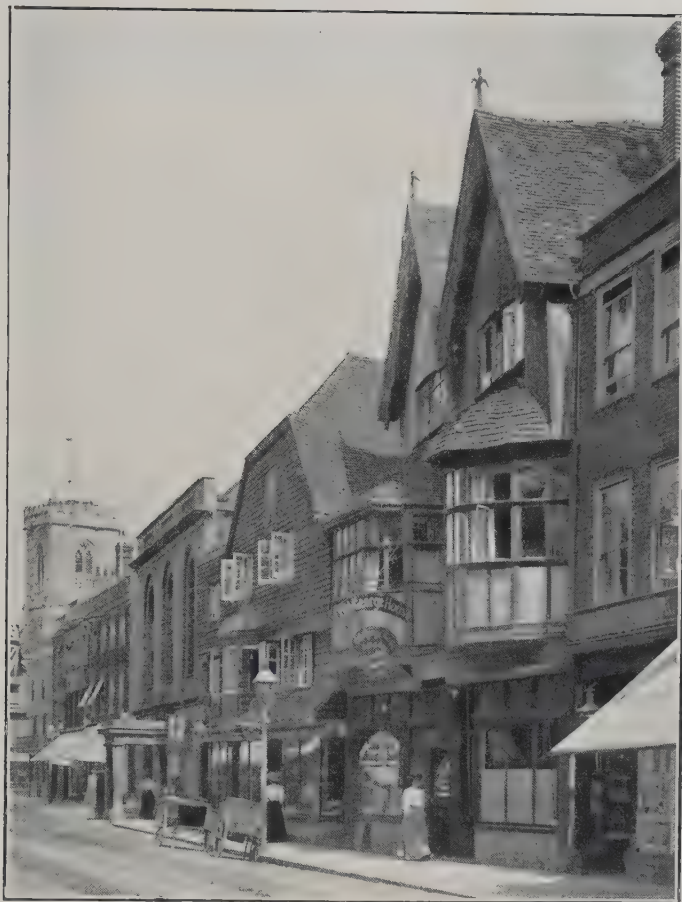
steps. Later, as the evening drew in, he returned to the parlour of the tavern where he had left his horse, "had his little table drawn out close before the fire, and fell to work upon a well-cooked steak and smoking hot potatoes, with a strong appreciation of their excellence, and a very keen sense of enjoyment. Beside him, too, there stood a jug of most stupendous Wiltshire beer ; and the effect of the whole was so transcendent that he was obliged every now and then to lay down his knife and fork, rub his hands and think about it. By the time the cheese and celery came, Mr. Pinch had taken a book out of his pocket, and could afford to trifle with the viands, now eating a little, now drinking a little, now reading a little."

Whilst thus comfortably and happily occupied, a stranger appeared in the room, who turned out to be Martin Chuzzlewit, for whom he was waiting. On becoming friends a bowl of punch was ordered which in due course came "hot and strong," and "after drinking to each other in the steaming mixture they became quite confidential." When the time came to depart, Tom settled his bill and Martin paid for the punch, and, "having wrapped themselves up, to the extent of their respective means, they went out together to the front door,

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

where Mr. Pecksniff's property stopped the way," and started on their way back.

Dickens makes no mention of the inn where this meeting took place, but H. Snowden Ward identified it as the old George Hotel in the High Street. We cannot vouch for the accuracy of this, although we are not inclined to dispute it. It may have been the inn Dickens had in his mind's eye, but it must have been a recollection of an earlier visit to Salisbury, for at the time he was writing *Martin Chuzzlewit* the George had lost its licence and would have been unable to supply the "jug of most stupendous Wiltshire beer" or the bowl of hot strong punch with which Tom Pinch and Martin regaled themselves. It may be the waiter sent for it as is done to-day. However, if the assumption that this is the tavern where the two met draws visitors to it, there can be no regrets, for it is surely one of the most ancient hostelries in the country. It dates back to 1320 and retains its fine Gothic arches of oak, its timbered roofs and ceilings, its massive oak supports to the cross-beams in several rooms, its splendid example of an oak Jacobean staircase, its four-poster bedsteads, old fire-places, and ancient furniture. In one of the rooms there is also a portion of a very ancient wall of Roman



THE GEORGE INN, SALISBURY

Photograph by T. W. Tyrrell

THE GEORGE INN, SALISBURY

bricks in herringbone work, where in 1869 were found Roman coins, some of which are to be seen in the hotel to-day.

It is no longer a coaching inn. The courtyard where the strolling players of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries gave their dramatic performances is now the garden, and the entrance for the coaches has been narrowed to an ordinary hotel entrance. In doing this, the rooms on each side were widened, and in this process the massive rough-hewn oaks that support the cross-beams of the ceilings, and which at one time formed part of the walls, became isolated, and stand now like trees growing out of the earth.

Such an ancient inn naturally has many historic stories and traditions associated with it, and these are not overlooked by the present proprietor in a little brochure available to visitors. Shakespeare, we are informed, acted in its court-yard, Oliver Cromwell slept in the inn when passing through the city to join his army on the 17th October, 1645, whilst Samuel Pepys makes mention of it in his diary where he records his welcome to a silk bed and a very good diet.

This inn is referred to again in Chapter XXXI, when Tom Pinch, having parted from Mr. Pecksniff, tramped on foot to Salisbury and "went

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

to the inn where he had waited for Martin," and ordered a bed, which, we are told "was a low four-poster shelving downward in the centre like a trough." He slept two nights at the inn before starting on his ride to London, so graphically described by Dickens, meeting Mrs. Lupin at the finger-posts where she had brought the box of good things which he shared with the coachman on the journey.

Where was situated the Baldfaced Stag, where four fresh horses were supplied to the admiring gaze of the toppers congregated about the door, cannot be determined. But the inn where Tom alighted in London, and where, in one of the public rooms opening from the yard, he fell fast asleep before the fire, although not named, was probably the "Swan with Two Necks," which stood in Lad Lane (now Gresham Street) until 1856. It was a famous coaching inn whence the Exeter and other coaches set out and returned.

There was another inn at Salisbury where John Westlock entertained Tom Pinch and Martin to dinner one evening. It is described as "the very first hotel in the town." Tom and Martin had walked in from Pecksniff's on a very cold and dry day and arrived at the inn with such flushed and burning faces and so brimful of vigour that the

THE WHITE HART, SALISBURY

waiter "almost felt assaulted by their presence." Dickens describes the hostelry in these words: "A Famous Inn! the hall a very grove of dead game and dangling joints of mutton; and in one corner an illustrious larder, with glass doors, developing cold fowls and noble joints, and tarts wherein the raspberry jam coyly withdrew itself, as such a precious creature should, behind a lattice-work of pastry. And behold, on the first floor, at the court end of the house, in a room with all the window-curtains drawn, a fire piled half-way up the chimney, plates warming before it, wax candles gleaming everywhere, and a table spread for three, with silver and glass enough for thirty—John Westlock."

What a greeting for hungry souls after a long tramp in the brisk cold country air. "I have ordered everything for dinner that we used to say we'd have, Tom," said their host, and an excellent idea of a dinner it was, too—"like a dream," as he added.

"John was wrong there," the narrator goes on, "because nobody ever dreamed such soup as was put upon the table directly afterwards; or such fish; or such side-dishes; or such a top and bottom; or such a course of birds and sweets; or, in short, anything approaching the reality of

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

entertainment at ten-and-sixpence a head, exclusive of wines. As to *them*, the man who can dream such iced champagne, such claret, port or sherry, had better go to bed and stop there."

It was a right royal, jolly dinner, and they were very merry and full of enjoyment all the time ; " but not the least pleasant part of the festival was when they all three sat about the fire, cracking nuts, drinking wine, and talking cheerfully." They parted for the night, " John Westlock full of light-heartedness and good humour, and poor Tom Pinch quite satisfied." After breakfast next morning the two young men returned to Pecksniff's and John Westlock to London.

Again Dickens does not give a name to this hotel. He tells us it was not the same one where Tom Pinch met Martin on the occasion referred to previously ; but he does tell us that it was the very first hotel in the town and that it was a famous inn. That has given the clue to many students of the book who have identified it as the White Hart, a very old house where many coaches stopped and were horsed in the coaching days of the period of the story. The White Hart was certainly famous and quite capable of providing such a dinner as John Westlock gave his two friends. It is called an hotel to-day and is

THE WHITE HART, SALISBURY

evidently very proud of its tradition and stories. Here are one or two anecdotes relating to its past taken from local histories.

In the year 1618 King James came to Sarum and it was just before this visit that Sir Walter Raleigh passed through the city. He was on his way from Plymouth after the failure of his last voyage to Guiana and reached Salisbury on the evening of Monday, the 27th July, in company with his wife, Sir Lewis Stukeley and Manourie, a French empiric. His forebodings were of the gloomiest and he feared to meet the King whose early arrival was expected. He therefore resorted to stratagem, and feigned sickness, hoping by this means to gain time to employ the intercession of friends, arrange his affairs and perhaps awaken the King's compassion. He feigned sickness, then insanity, and by means of unguents provided by Manourie acquired the appearance of suffering from a loathsome skin disease. Three local physicians were called in and pronounced the disease incurable. This treatment and his exertions produced at the end of the second day an acute sense of hunger, and, in the words of the chronicler, "Manourie accordingly procured from the White Hart inn a leg of mutton and some loaves, which Raleigh devoured in secret and thus

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

led his attendants to suppose that he took no kind of sustenance." It was in Salisbury at this time that he wrote his apology for his last voyage to Guiana. The Court arrived before he left, but he did not see the King and gained a temporary respite.

On the 9th October, 1780, the celebrated Henry Laurens, President of the American Congress, arrived at the White Hart on his way to London, where he was committed to the Tower.

The Duke and Duchess of Orleans with a numerous retinue arrived at the White Hart on the 13th September, 1816.

On October 25th, 1830, the Duchess of Kent and Princess Victoria, with their suite, arrived at the White Hart from Erlestoke Park. They were attended by a guard of honour from the Salisbury Troop of Yeomanry.

The White Hart is probably the most famous in the city to-day. Its outside appearance is more like a small replica of the National Gallery, with its stone pillars and stucco work. Prominently placed over the entrance is a graceful White Hart with its neck encircled with the gold band of tradition.

A fitting inn, John Westlock, for your royal repast !

THE BLACK BULL, HOLBORN

The exciting and romantic days of coaching were beginning to ebb away at the time *Martin Chuzzlewit* was published ; but so wonderfully does Dickens describe the scenes on the road, and so exhilarating are his word-pictures, the spirit of those times



THE BLACK BULL, HOLBORN
Drawn by L. Walker

can better be visualized from its pages than from any history of the period. Not only are those days not allowed to be forgotten, but inns that have since been wiped out of existence have had their name and fame indelibly marked on the tablets of time for ever.

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

Such is the case of the Black Bull that once stood in Holborn. It was here that the two estimable females, Sairey Gamp and Betsey Prig, professionally attended Mr. Lewsome in his illness. Mr. Lewsome, it will be remembered, was the young man who sold the drugs to Jonas Chuzzlewit with which old Anthony was poisoned, and who after the death of the latter made a voluntary confession of the fact, impelled to do so by the torture of mind and dread of death he himself endured by his severe sickness.

This is Mrs. Gamp's announcement of her appointment :

"There is a gent, sir, at the Bull in Holborn, as has been took ill there, and is bad abed. They have a day-nurse as was recommended from Bartholomew's; and well I knows her, Mr. Mould, her name bein' Mrs. Prig, the best of creeturs. But she is otherwise engaged at night, and they are in wants of night-watching; consequent she says to them, having reposed the greatest friendliness in me for twenty year, 'The soberest person going, and the best of blessings in a sick room, is Mrs. Gamp. Send a boy to Kingsgate Street,' she says, 'and snap her up at any price, for Mrs. Gamp is worth her weight and more in goldian guineas.' My land-

THE BLACK BULL, HOLBORN

lord brings the message down to me, and says, 'Bein' in a light place where you are, and this job promising so well, why not unite the two?' "

Dickens then describes how Mrs. Gamp went to her private lodgings in Kingsgate Street close to the tavern, "for a bundle of robes and wrappings comfortable in the night season ; and then repaired to the Bull in Holborn, which she reached as the clocks were striking eight.

"As she turned into the yard, she stopped ; for the landlord, landlady, and head chambermaid, were all on the threshold together, talking earnestly with a young gentleman who seemed to have just come or to be just going away. The first words that struck upon Mrs. Gamp's ear obviously bore reference to the patient ; and, it being expedient that all good attendants should know as much as possible about the case on which their skill is brought to bear, Mrs. Gamp listened as a matter of duty."

At a suitable moment she ventured the remark, "Ah ! a rayal gentleman !" and, advancing, introduced herself, observing :

"The night nurse from Kingsgate Street, well bekown to Mrs. Prig the day-nurse, and the best of creeturs. . . . It ain't the fust time by many score, ma'am," dropping a curtsy to the

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

landlady, "that Mrs. Prig and me has nursed together, turn and turn about, one off, one on. We knows each other's ways, and often gives relief when others failed."

Regarding herself as having now delivered her inauguration address, Mrs. Gamp curtsied all round, and signified her wish to be conducted to the scene of her official duties. The chambermaid led her, through a variety of intricate passages, to the top of the house ; and, pointing at length to a solitary door at the end of a gallery, informed her that yonder was the chamber where the patient lay. That done, she hurried off with all the speed she could make.

"Mrs. Gamp traversed the gallery in a great heat from having carried her large bundle up so many stairs, and tapped at the door, which was immediately opened by Mrs. Prig, bonneted and shawled and all impatience to be gone."

Having learned from Mrs. Prig that the pickled salmon was quite delicious, that the cold meat tasted of the stables, that the drinks were all good, that "the physic and them things is on the drawers and mankleshelf," and other valuable bits of information, thanked her and entered upon her occupation. "A little dull, but not so bad as might be," Mrs. Gamp remarked.

THE BLACK BULL, HOLBORN

“ I’m glad to see a parapidge in case of fire, and lots of roofs and chimley-pots to walk upon.” Mrs. Gamp was looking out of the window at the time, and the observations she made then applied to the view seen from the same window during a visit to it just before the inn was destroyed.

Having unpacked her bundle and settled things to her liking she came to the conclusion that it was time for supper and promptly rang for the maid.

“ I think, young woman,” said Mrs. Gamp to the assistant chambermaid, in a tone expressive of weakness, “ that I could pick a little bit of pickled salmon, with a nice little sprig of fennel, and a sprinkling of white pepper. I takes new bread, my dear, with jest a little pat of fresh butter, and a mossel of cheese. In case there should be such a thing as a cowcumber in the ’ouse, will you be so kind as bring it, for I’m rather partial to ’em, and they does a world of good in a sick-room. If they draws the Brighton Tipper here, I takes *that* ale at night, my love ; it bein’ considered wakeful by the doctors. And whatever you do, young woman, don’t bring more than a shilling’s-worth of gin and water warm when I rings the bell a second time ; for that is always my allowance, and I never takes a drop beyond ! ”

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

“A tray was brought with everything upon it, even to the cucumber; and Mrs. Gamp accordingly sat down to eat and drink in high good humour. The extent to which she availed herself of the vinegar, and supped up that refreshing fluid with the blade of her knife, can scarcely be expressed in narrative.”

This was the occasion, and the Black Bull the place, where Mrs. Gamp gave utterance to her famous piece of philosophy: “What a blessed thing it is—living in a wale—to be contented.”

Without following Mrs. Gamp through the details of her effort to help the patient to convalescence—albeit those efforts were peculiar to herself and have a unique interest on that account—we need only record that, in spite of her assurance that, “of all the trying invalieges in this walley of the shadder, that one beats ’em black and blue,” Mr. Lewsome was eventually able to be moved into the country and Mrs. Gamp was deputed to accompany him there by coach.

“Arriving at the tavern, Mrs. Gamp (who was full-dressed for the journey, in her latest suit of mourning) left her friends to entertain themselves in the yard, while she ascended to the sick-room, where her fellow-labourer, Mrs. Prig, was dressing

THE BLACK BULL, HOLBORN

the invalid," who was ultimately assisted downstairs to the coach, just then on the point of starting.

"It was a troublesome matter to adjust Mrs. Gamp's luggage to her satisfaction; for every package belonging to that lady had the inconvenient property of requiring to be put in a boot by itself, and to have no other luggage near it, on pain of actions at law for heavy damages against the proprietors of the coach. The umbrella with the circular patch was particularly hard to be got rid of, and several times thrust out its battered brass nozzle from improper crevices and chinks, to the great terror of the other passengers. Indeed, in her intense anxiety to find a haven of refuge for this chattel, Mrs. Gamp so often moved it, in the course of five minutes, that it seemed not one umbrella but fifty. At length it was lost, or said to be; and for the next five minutes she was face to face with the coachman, go wherever he might, protesting that it should be 'made good' though she took the question to the House of Commons.

"At last, her bundle, and her pattens, and her basket, and everything else, being disposed of, she took a friendly leave of Poll and Mr. Bailey,

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

dropped a curtsy to John Westlock, and parted as from a cherished member of the sisterhood with Betsey Prig.

“ ‘Wishin’ you lots of sickness, my darling creetur,’ Mrs. Gamp observed, ‘and good places. It won’t be long, I hope, before we works together, off and on, again, Betsey: and may our next meetin’ be at a large family’s, where they all takes it reg’lar, one from another, turn and turn about, and has it businesslike.’ ”

And so the coach rolled out of the Bull yard with Mrs. Gamp and her charge comfortably seated within, amidst a cloud of bustle and commotion, terminating events which have left their mark for all time on the history of the famous Dickensian tavern.

Although the Black Bull during its existence in so important a thoroughfare as Holborn must have been the centre of much activity in the coaching days, the resort of many notables and the scene of important events, there seem scanty records of its past history available.

We find but few references to it in the annals of London beyond the fact that it was a busy coaching inn from the seventeenth century until the passing of the coaches from the road in the nineteenth century, when its association with the

THE BLACK BULL, HOLBORN

notorious Mrs. Gamp gave it its chief claim to fame.

How far its history dates back it is difficult to say. It may even have been one of those many fair houses and inns for travellers referred to by Stow as existing on the north side of Oldbourne in the middle of the sixteenth century.



THE SIGN OF THE BLACK BULL

In the days when access to the city of London was not possible after sundown, the Black Bull and many others, situated outside the boundary, catered for those late comers who could not enter the gates. No doubt these inns were established to meet such contingencies, and perforce did a good trade. They were all very similar in general appearance and in accommodation. The Black Bull was the terminus and starting place for

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

coaches, and its court-yard, like most of the others, was large and surrounded by galleries. It had, of course, many flights of stairs, and a variety of intricate passages up to the top of the building. But it had a more distinctive and prominent sign than the rest of them in this district, which, perhaps, made it more conspicuous. This was the very fine specimen of a black bull, with gilt horns and hoofs, and a golden band round its body. Its perfection of workmanship stamped it as that of some renowned artist. Resting on a bracket fixed to the front of the building, it naturally attracted attention immediately, and it was to be seen as late as 1904 when the building was finally demolished to make room for a different kind of business altogether. By that time all the romance of the coaching era had left the tavern, and its court-yard had long before been put to other uses.

This building of Mrs. Gamp's day was erected in 1825, but many such had flourished earlier on the same site, although we believe the splendid effigy which adorned its exterior first appeared in that year. Prior to that date the inn was known as the Bull and Gate, unless Fielding enlarged its designation unwittingly when he tells us in 1750 that Tom Jones, on entering London after his exciting encounter with highwaymen between

THE BLACK BULL, HOLBORN

Barnet and the metropolis, put up at the "Bull and Gate in Holborn." Whatever it may have been called in Fielding's days, its fame will survive in history as the Black Bull of Holborn, immortalized by association with Sairey Gamp.

CHAPTER VIII

DOMBEY AND SON

THE BEDFORD, BRIGHTON —THE ROYAL, LEAMINGTON—LONG'S HOTEL, BOND STREET —AND OTHERS

ALTHOUGH a good deal of *Dombey and Son* is enacted at Brighton, only one of its famous hotels plays any prominent part in the story, and that is the Bedford. It is first mentioned during a conversation between Major Bagstock and Mr. Dombey, when the former asks "Are you remaining here, Mr. Dombey?" "I generally come down once a week, Major," returned that gentleman; "I stay at the Bedford." "I shall have the honour of calling at the Bedford, sir, if you'll permit me," said the Major, and in fulfilment of his promise he did so.

On another occasion, "Mr. Dombey, bringing down Miss Tox and Mrs. Chick to see the children,

THE BEDFORD HOTEL, BRIGHTON

and finding the Major again at Brighton, invited him to dinner at the Bedford, and complimented Miss Tox highly beforehand on her neighbour and acquaintance." The Major was considered to possess an inexhaustible fund of conversation, and showed as great an appetite in that respect "as in regard of the various dainties on the table, among which he may be said to have wallowed." After dinner, they had a long rubber of whist, before they took a late farewell of the Major, who retired to his own hotel, which, by the way, is not mentioned.

On the following day, when Mr. Dombey, Mrs. Chick and Miss Tox were sitting at breakfast, Florence came running in to announce in great excitement the unexpected arrival of Walter and Captain Cuttle, who had come to ask the favour of a loan of three hundred pounds or so of Mr. Dombey to liquidate the financial embarrassment of their old friend Sol Gills. It will be recalled how Captain Cuttle offered as security his silver watch, the ready money he possessed, his silver teaspoons, and sugar-tongs; and "piling them up into a heap that they might look as precious as possible" delivered himself of these words:

"Half a loaf's better than no bread, and the

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

same remark holds good with crumbs. There's a few. Annuity of one hundred pound prannum also ready to be made over." The simple and transparent honesty of Captain Cuttle succeeded in the task he set himself, Mr. Dombey arranging the little matter for him.

The Bedford can rightly claim the honour of having been the house where this memorable scene in the story of Captain Cuttle took place. In those days it was a prominent and fashionable hotel, and remains so to-day.

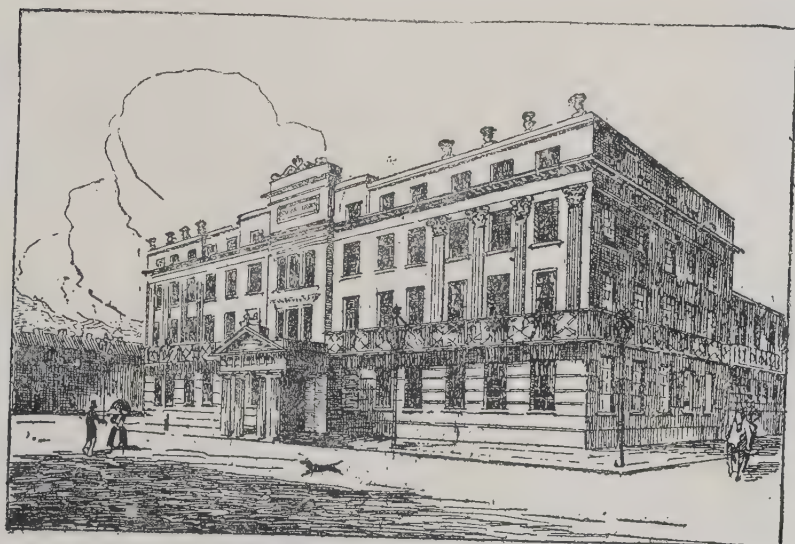
Dickens frequently stayed at Brighton and very often at the Bedford, where he wrote a good deal of *The Haunted Man* and portions of other stories.

The Princess's Arms, spoken of as being "much resorted to by splendid footmen," which was in Princess's Place, where Miss Tox inhabited a dark little house, cannot be identified. Indeed, search for Princess's Place in old directories of Brighton has entirely failed, and it must be assumed that no such place ever existed there.

At the time Dickens was writing *Dombey and Son* in 1846, the Royal Hotel at Leamington, where Mr. Dombey stayed with Major Bagstock, and where Edith Granger, who became his second wife, visited him with her mother on one occasion,



THE BEDFORD HOTEL, BRIGHTON
From an old Engraving



THE ROYAL HOTEL, LEAMINGTON
From a contemporary lithograph

THE ROYAL HOTEL, LEAMINGTON

did not exist, having been demolished about 1841-2 to make way for railway improvements. But he knew the hotel in its palmy and aristocratic days, for in 1838 he and his artist friend, Phiz, made a bachelor excursion in the autumn of that year into the Midlands by coach, their first halt being Leamington, and the hotel they put up at there was Copp's Royal Hotel, which stood at the corner of Clemens Street and High Street. In writing to his wife of his arrival there, he said: "We found a roaring fire, an elegant dinner, a snug room, and capital beds all ready for us at Leamington, after a very agreeable (but very cold) ride." From here they visited Kenilworth, Warwick, and Stratford, and the outcome of the jaunts is reflected in the story.

Some writers, in referring to the incidents in *Dombey and Son* associated with the Royal Hotel, have either assumed that it is still there, or, having discovered that there is no hotel with that name in the town, have given the Regent the credit of being the original of Mr. Dombey's Royal Hotel. Neither is correct. The Royal Hotel of *Dombey and Son* was the Royal Hotel of Dickens's visit to Leamington in 1838, and his descriptions of it in the book must have been made from memory,

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

for in 1846, when he was writing of it in the novel, the hotel had already been demolished.

Leamington always boasted one peculiarity which it claimed did not belong to any other watering-place: the "truly select nature and high rank of respectability of the greater part of its frequenters." For the reception of such notables several really first-class hotels were provided.

The Regent was the most fashionable for a period, owing to the fact that it was the resort of Royalty; but Copp's Royal Hotel was a keen rival, and when in 1828 it was "re-erected on a scale of magnificence almost unprecedented, displaying a grand front, cased in Roman cement to imitate stone . . . in the style of Grecian architecture," it even outshone the Regent.

The building was rusticated to the height of the first story and a balcony on a level with the second floor ran the whole extent of the hotel. Its appearance is fully described in an old and very rare guide-book, and so minutely described that it is worth quoting:

"The wings, which are both slightly projected, are embellished with four fluted pilasters of the Corinthian order, which, springing from the level

THE ROYAL HOTEL, LEAMINGTON

of the second floor and terminating at the top of the third, support a rich entablature extending the whole length of the building. Each wing is surmounted by four ornamental vases, and, at the extreme height of the centre, beneath the ornamental scroll, is a tablet containing the name of the hotel. The principal entrance is in the centre, beneath a portico projecting ten feet from the building, supported by duplicated pillars of the Doric order, fluted and surmounted by the Royal Arms, richly carved in stone. The interior of this building for chasteness of design, richness of material, and correctness of execution is, we believe, equal to any in the Kingdom. The entrance hall . . . is lighted by a beautiful window of coloured glass, in the centre of which, on a fawn-coloured mosaic ground, are the Royal Arms, richly emblazoned, surrounded by an ornamental gold scroll on a purple ground containing medallions representing the principal views in the vicinity. The sideboards are supported and adorned by appropriate Grecian ornaments. On the right of the public dining-room, upwards of fifty feet by twenty-four feet, the ceiling is supported by pillars and pilasters of Doric order. A geometrical staircase of twenty-one steps conducts you to the public drawing-room, of the

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

same noble dimensions as the dining-room ; on the same floor are a number of private sitting-rooms, papered with rich French paper, of vivid colouring, representing subjects classical, mythological, etc. The bedrooms are fitted up with every attention to comfort and convenience. . . . Detached are extensive lock-up coach houses, stabling, etc."

This meticulous description of it does not suggest that the Royal Hotel was one which would have appealed very much to Dickens, but it was the ideal spot for Major Bagstock and Mr. Dombey, and so we find that eight years later the novelist makes use of his knowledge of it, and it becomes the headquarters of his two characters during their visit to the fashionable watering-place, whilst its rooms furnish the background for a series of scenes to be found in the pages of *Dombey and Son*.

It will be recalled that Major Bagstock persuaded Mr. Dombey that he wanted a change, and suggested that he should accompany him to Leamington. Mr. Dombey consented, became the Major's guest and the two travelled down by train, making the Royal Hotel their headquarters, "where the rooms and dinner had been ordered," and where the Major at their first meal "so

THE ROYAL HOTEL, 'LEAMINGTON

oppressed his organs of speech by eating and drinking that when he retired to bed he had no voice at all, except to cough with, and could only make himself intelligible to the dark servant by gasping at him. He not only rose next morning, however, like a giant refreshed, but conducted himself, at breakfast, like a giant refreshing."

At this meal they arranged their daily habits. The Major was to take the responsibility of ordering everything to eat and drink; and they were to have late breakfast together every morning, and a late dinner together every day. They occupied, no doubt, a suite of the private rooms referred to above, for there is no reference to the large dining-room, nor would it have suited the personal and special requirements of the two men and the friends they brought there.

It will be remembered that, whilst these two friends were taking a constitutional, they encountered the Major's acquaintances, Mrs. Skewton and her daughter Edith, and Dombey was formally introduced. On taking their departure from the fair enchantress, the Major volunteered the fact that he was "staying at the Royal Hotel with his friend Dombey," and invited the ladies to join them "one

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

evening when you are good," as he put it to Mrs. Skewton.

Having met once or twice in the pump-room and elsewhere, and the men having called upon the ladies, the latter were invited to breakfast at the Royal Hotel, prior to a drive to Kenilworth and Warwick. In the meantime, Carker had arrived to transact some business with his master, and in the evening the three men dined together. At a fitting moment the wine was consecrated "to a divinity whom Joe is proud to know, and at a distance humbly and reverently to admire. Edith," went on the Major, "is her name; angelic Edith!" "Angelic Edith," cried the smiling Carker, "Edith, by all means," said Mr. Dombey. And thus, in a private dining-room of the Royal Hotel was pledged the toast of Dombey's future wife—the second Mrs. Dombey.

The breakfast was punctually prepared next morning, and Dombey, Bagstock and Carker excitedly awaited the ladies' arrival. A pleasant time ensued and ultimately all set out on the little trip which proved so momentous a one for Mr. Dombey. For had he not made an appointment with Edith for the next day, "for a purpose," as he told Mrs. Skewton? At any rate, the three men returned to the Royal Hotel in good spirits,

LONG'S HOTEL, BOND STREET

the Major being in such high glee that he cried out, " Damme, sir, old Joe has a mind to propose an alteration in the name of the hotel, and that it should be called the Three Jolly Bachelors in honour of ourselves and Carker."

After keeping his appointment with Edith, and having been accepted, Mr. Dombey and the Major left Leamington, and the Royal Hotel has no further place in the story.

When Mr. Toots, having come into a portion of his worldly wealth and furnished his choice set of apartments, determined to apply himself to the science of life, he engaged the Game Chicken to instruct him in " the cultivation of those gentle arts which refine and humanise existence." The Game Chicken, we are informed, was always to be heard of at the bar of the Black Badger. Towards the end of the book, when Toots and the Chicken part company, the latter seems to have chosen another house of call. " I'm afore the public, I'm to be heard on at the bar of the Little Helephant. . . ." Whether these two taverns existed, or where, history does not relate.

Cousin Feenix, on his arrival from abroad expressly to attend Mr. Dombey's wedding, stayed at Long's Hotel in Bond Street. No incident of any great moment takes place within its walls,

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

except that Lord Feenix slept and was shaved there.

Long's Hotel does not now exist, but was a fashionable and well-known house in those days when Lord Feenix was a man about town. It stood at the junction of Clifford Street and Bond Street, and was a square-standing corner building.

It was frequented by the leading lights of the aristocracy and of the literary world in its flourishing days, and it is recorded that Byron lived there for a time. That he and Sir Walter Scott dined there together on one occasion is an outstanding fact of its history.

From Cousin Feenix's fashionable hotel we turn to a very different kind of house in the King's Arms, Balls Pond way, where Mr. Perch seemed to be a well-known figure. Mr. Perch had an air of feverish lassitude about him that seemed referable to drams, "and which, in fact, might no doubt have been traced to those numerous discoveries of himself in the bars of public-houses." The King's Arms was one of these, in whose parlour he met the man "with military frogs," who took "a little observation" which he let drop about Carker and Mrs. Dombey, and worked it up in print "in a most surprising manner"

THE KING'S ARMS, BALLS POND
in the Sunday paper, a journalistic method
that apparently is not an invention of modern
times.

CHAPTER IX

DAVID COPPERFIELD

THE ROYAL HOTEL, LOWESTOFT — THE PLOUGH,
BLUNDERSTONE — THE VILLAGE MAID, LOUND
—THE YARMOUTH INNS — THE BLUE BOAR —
THE RED LION — TWO CANTERBURY INNS —
THE PIAZZA HOTEL — JACK STRAW'S CASTLE —
THE SWAN, HUNGERFORD STAIRS — AND OTHERS

BEFORE Dickens commenced to write *David Copperfield*, he visited all the districts of its early scenes to obtain local colour, and to learn something of the geography of Blunderstone, Lowestoft and Yarmouth. He was a guest of Sir Morton Peto's at Somerleyton and was invited there ostensibly to see Lowestoft, a town then just emerging into prominence as a watering-place, in the hope that he might introduce it into one of his books. On another occasion he, with John Leech and Mark Lemon, visited Yarmouth

THE ROYAL HOTEL, LOWESTOFT

and stayed at the Royal Hotel on the Marine Parade. He either did not care very much for Lowestoft, or else found that Yarmouth was more suitable to the purpose of his book, for we only find one small incident in it associated with the first-named town.

This occurred on one autumn morning when Mr. Murdstone took little David on to the saddle of his horse and rode off with him to Lowestoft to see some friends there with a yacht. "We went to an hotel by the sea, where two gentlemen were smoking cigars in a room by themselves," says David. "Each of them was lying on at least four chairs and had a large rough jacket on. In a corner was a heap of coats and boat-cloaks, and a flag, all bundled up together."

Here Mr. Murdstone was chaffed about David, whom his friends referred to as "the bewitching Mrs. Copperfield's incumbrance," and he warned them to take care as "somebody's sharp." "Who is?" asked Quinion. "Only Brooks of Sheffield," replied Mr. Murdstone, which caused much amusement, and whenever any reference was made to David he was always styled "Brooks of Sheffield." Sherry was ordered in with which to drink to Brooks, and David was made to partake of the wine with a biscuit, and

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

drink to the toast of "Confusion to Brooks of Sheffield."

After this incident they all walked about the cliffs, looked at things through a telescope, and then returned to the hotel to an early dinner, and David and his future father-in-law afterwards wended their way back to Blunderstone.

The hotel in which all this took place was probably the Royal, which stands to-day facing the pier and harbour, but it has evidently been rebuilt, or very much altered structurally.

Blunderstone has a village ale-house called the Plough, from which started Barkis the carrier on his daily trip to Yarmouth. David speaks of this inn, and pictures the parlour of it as the room where "Commodore Trunnion held that club with Mr. Pickle." It is still a comfortable ale-house and a centre of attraction to visitors of the unspoiled village where David was born.

On the occasion of David's drive in the carrier's cart to Yarmouth for a stay with Daniel Peggotty in order to be out of the way for his mother's marriage to Mr. Murdstone, we are introduced to the road between the village and the famous seaside town, so frequently used by Barkis and so often referred to in the course of the story.



THE PLOUGH INN, BLUNDERSTONE



THE BUCK INN

YARMOUTH



THE DUKE'S HEAD

Photographs by T. W. Tyrrell

THE BUCK INN, YARMOUTH

The first halt was made at a public-house where a long wait occurred whilst a bedstead was delivered there. This inn was probably the Village Maid, at Lound, a name that may also have suggested that of the Willing Mind, the public-house where Mr. Peggotty went occasionally for short spells, as he put it to Mrs. Gummidge. But no public-house with that name, or anything like it, existed in Yarmouth, and it must, therefore, be assumed that no particular one was intended.

Arriving at Yarmouth, David found Ham awaiting him at the public-house which was the stopping place of the Blunderstone carrier. Although Dickens does not mention its name, the Buck Inn undoubtedly was the identical house where Barkis came to a halt on such occasions, and it still exists in the Market Square. At the end of his visit, David, arm-in-arm with Little Em'ly, made for the same inn once again to meet Barkis for the homeward journey in his cart.

The inn, however, at Yarmouth which has more importance attaching to it than any other is that where David met the friendly waiter whilst waiting for the coach to take him to London, and where he procured the sheet of paper and ink-stand to

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

write his promised note to Clara Peggotty assuring her that "Barkis is willing."

There is little doubt that the inn referred to here was the Duke's Head. It was the principal coaching inn of the town, and we know that Dickens knew it well. On his arrival there in Barkis's cart, David observed that "the coach was in the yard shining very much all over, but without any horses to it as yet ; and it looked in that state as if nothing was more unlikely than its ever going to London." To the coffee-room, which was a long one with some maps in it, David was conducted by William the waiter, who assisted him to get through his meal, and told him the horrible tale of the man who died from drinking a glass of ale that was too old for him. But that incident of David and the friendly waiter is too well known to need recapitulation here.

Before leaving Yarmouth, there is one more inn that claims attention. When David and Steerforth later on in the story visited the Peggottys, the hotel they stayed at has been identified as the Star Hotel, an old mansion, with moulded ribbed ceilings and the sides of the rooms panelled with oak. It has been added to since those days, but the old part still remains. It was in this house

THE BLUE BOAR, WHITECHAPEL

that Miss Mowcher was first introduced into the story.

It is also believed that the Feathers at Gorleston is the "decent ale-house" on the road to Lowestoft where David Copperfield, as stated in Chapter XXXI, stopped to dine, when out for a walk whilst on a visit to Yarmouth.

But let us return to David on the coach waiting to start for Salem House, Blackheath, via London. Having suffered a good deal of chaff from the maids and others over the huge dinner he was supposed to have eaten, the coach started on its journey, during which the jokes about his appetite continued. He reached his destination at last, having approached London "by degrees, and got, in due time, to the inn in the Whitechapel district," he says, "for which we were bound. I forget whether it was the Blue Bull or the Blue Boar; but I know it was the Blue Something, and that its likeness was painted up on the back of the coach." Here, more solitary than Robinson Crusoe, he went into the booking-office, and, "by invitation of the clerk on duty, passed behind the counter, and sat down on the scale at which they weighed the luggage." Thus he waited until called for by Mr. Mell, when the clerk "slanted me off the scale, and pushed me

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

over to him, as if I were weighed, bought, delivered, and paid for."

This inn was the Blue Boar, an old coaching inn long demolished, where the daily coach from Yarmouth made its halting place. There is still a relic of it in the shape of a sculptured effigy of a boar, with gilded tusks and hoofs, built into the wall of a tobacco factory marking the site of the inn.

In Chapter XI of the book, describing David's start in life on his own account, there are one or two inns and taverns mentioned where he partook of meals and other refreshment. He tells us he had "a plate of bread and cheese and a glass of beer, from a miserable old public-house opposite our place of business, called the Lion, or the Lion and something else that I have forgotten." This has not definitely been identified, but may have been the White Swan at Hungerford Stairs, referred to later. On another occasion he went into a public-house one hot evening and said to the landlord, "What is your best—your *very best*—ale a glass?" "Twopence-halfpenny is the price of the Genuine Stunning ale," was the reply. "Then," says I, producing the money, "just draw me a glass of the Genuine Stunning, if you please, with a good head to it." Having served

THE RED LION, PARLIAMENT STREET

him, the landlord invited his wife to join him in surveying the little customer and "the landlord's wife, opening the little half-door of the bar, and bending down, gave me my money back, and gave me a kiss that was half-admiring and half-compassionate, but all womanly and good, I am sure."

This incident actually occurred to Dickens himself when a lad in the blacking factory, for he has admitted it to be so, in his own words, recorded in Forster's "Life," Book 1, Chapter XI. He there states that on the occasion in question he "went into a public-house in Parliament Street, which is still there, though altered, at the corner of the short street leading into Cannon Row." The public-house where it took place was the Red Lion at 48 Parliament Street, and is situated at the corner of Derby Street. There is a Red Lion public-house there to-day—not the same one Dickens visited—that was demolished in 1899—but on the same spot. It is more pretentious than the old one, but keeps its red lion rampant as a sign, and has a bust of the novelist, standing within a niche in the front of the building as a hall-mark of its Dickensian association.

The "little public-house close to the river, with an open space before it, where some coal-heavers

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

were dancing," referred to in the same chapter, was the Fox under the Hill* in the Adelphi.

There are two inns in Canterbury associated with the book, the county inn where Mr. Dick stayed when on his visits to David Copperfield every alternate Wednesday, and the "little inn" where Mr. Micawber stayed on his first and subsequent visits to the ancient city.

The county inn was without doubt the Royal Fountain Hotel in St. Margaret's Street, for it was invariably referred to in the coaching days as *the* county inn of the city, in the same manner that David speaks of it in the seventeenth chapter of David Copperfield, where he tells us that he "saw Mr. Dick every alternate Wednesday when he arrived by stage-coach at noon, to stay until next morning. . . . Mr. Dick was very partial to gingerbread. To render his visits more agreeable, my aunt had instructed me to open a credit for him at a cake shop, which was hampered with the stipulation that he should not be served with more than one shilling's worth in the course of any one day. This, and the reference of all his little bills at the county inn where he slept, to my aunt, before they were paid, induced me to

* See *The Inns and Taverns of Pickwick*.

THE FOUNTAIN HOTEL, CANTERBURY

suspect that he was only allowed to rattle his money, and not to spend it."

On these occasions, Mr. Dick would be constantly in the company of David, and on the Thursday mornings he would accompany him from the hotel to the coach office before going back to school. And so the Royal Fountain Hotel has added to its traditions that of being the hotel where Mr. Dick slept. Dickens does not describe it in detail, and does not even refer to it again in the book; but on the 4th of November, 1861, which he describes as a "windy night," Dickens himself stayed there after giving a reading of *David Copperfield* at the theatre. Writing to his daughter Mamie on that date he says, "a word of report before I go to bed. An excellent house to-night, and an audience positively perfect. The greatest part of it stalls, and an intelligent and delightful response in them, like a touch of a beautiful instrument. 'Copperfield' wound up in a real burst of feeling and delight."

This letter was headed "Fountain Hotel, Canterbury." Dickens visited the city again in the summer of 1869, driving there from Gads Hill with some American friends, and made the Fountain Hotel his halting place, whilst he and his companions explored the city. They drove

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

into Canterbury just as the bells of the cathedral were ringing for afternoon service, George Dolby informs us, and "turned into the by-street in which the Fountain Hotel is situated, where the carriages and horses were to be put up," and where the party took tea prior to starting back for home.

"The inns in England are the best in Europe, those in Canterbury are the best in England, and the Fountain wherein I am now lodged as handsomely as I were in the King's palace, the best in Canterbury." So wrote the Ambassador of the Emperor of Germany to his master on the occasion of his visit to this country to attend the marriage ceremony of Edward the First to his second Queen, Margaret of France, in Canterbury Cathedral on the 12th of September, 1299.

The Royal Fountain Hotel, as it is now called, is one of the oldest inns in England; indeed, it is so old as to claim that the wife of Earl Godwin, when she came to meet her husband on his return from Denmark in the year 1029, stayed there. It also claims to have been the temporary residence of Archbishop Lanfranc whilst his palace was being built in 1070; and there is a legend associated with it that the four knights who murdered Thomas à Becket made it their rendezvous in 1170.

THE FOUNTAIN HOTEL, CANTERBURY

To-day the inn still retains its old-world atmosphere, although certain of its apartments and appurtenances have been made to conform to modern requirements. Its passages and stairs are narrow and winding, antique furniture, brasses, and copper utensils are in great evidence, and the huge kitchen with its wide fire-place and open chimney still reminds us of the old days. Upstairs is a spacious room measuring some forty or fifty feet in length, in the centre of which is one of those priceless tables made in separate pieces going the whole length of the room, looking, when we last saw it, with scores of chairs set around it, like a gigantic elongated board-room table waiting for a meeting to begin. This room is used for banquets, and often the Mayor holds his official dinners there. But it would seem that the chief claimants to its use is "The Canterbury Farmers' Club and East Kent Chamber of Agricultural Commerce," for its walls are covered with portraits in oils of some of the past presidents, whilst a long list of them dating from 1855-1919 hangs in a prominent position.

The "little inn" where Mr. and Mrs. Micawber stayed on the occasion when they thought it was so advisable that they should see the Medway in the hope of finding an opening in the coal trade for

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

Mr. Micawber is the Sun Inn in Sun Street, once the stopping-place for the omnibus which plied between Canterbury and Herne Bay.

It will be remembered that David was taking tea with the Heeps when suddenly Mr. Micawber appeared. David, rather apprehensive of what his old friend might say next, hurried him away by asking, "Shall we go and see Mrs. Micawber, sir?" and they both sallied forth, Mr. Micawber humming a tune on the way. "It was a little inn where Mr. Micawber put up, and he occupied a little room in it, partitioned off from the commercial room, and strongly flavoured with tobacco smoke. I think it was over the kitchen, because a warm greasy smell appeared to come up through the chinks of the floor, and there was a flabby perspiration on the walls. I know it was near the bar, on account of the smell of spirits and jingling of glasses. Here, recumbent on a sofa, underneath a picture of a race-horse, with her head close to the fire and her feet pushing the mustard off the dumb-waiter at the other end of the room, was Mrs. Micawber."

Undaunted by the fact that his resources were extremely low, Mr. Micawber pressed David to dine with him, and the repast was accordingly arranged. David describes it as "a beautiful

THE SUN INN, CANTERBURY

little dinner. Quite an elegant dish of fish ; the kidney end of a loin of veal, roasted ; fried sausage-meat, a partridge, and a pudding. There was wine and there was strong ale ; and after



Drawn by F. G. Kilton

dinner Mrs. Micawber made us a bowl of hot punch with her own hands. Mr. Micawber was uncommonly convivial. . . . He got cheerfully sentimental about the town and proposed success to it, observing that Mrs. Micawber and himself had been made extremely snug and comfortable. . .

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

As the punch disappeared, Mr. Micawber became still more friendly and convivial. Mrs. Micawber's spirits becoming elevated, too, we sang 'Auld Lang Syne.' . . . In a word, I never saw anybody so thoroughly jovial as Mr. Micawber was, down to the very last moment of the evening, when I took a hearty farewell of himself and his amiable wife."

The "little inn" is the scene of another incident in the book, as narrated in Chapter LII, where Uriah Heep is exposed. David, Mr. Dick, Traddles, and Betsey Trotwood are invited down to Canterbury "to assist at an explosion." Arriving by the Dover Mail, they all put up at this inn on the recommendation of Mr. Micawber, and there awaited his arrival. It is recorded that they got into the hotel with some trouble in the middle of the night, and "went shivering at that uncomfortable hour" to their respective beds, through various close passages, "which smelt as if they had been steeped for ages in a solution of soup and stables." In the morning David took a stroll, and states how he "looked at the old house from the corner of the street . . . the early sun was striking edgewise on its gables and lattice-windows, touching them with gold, and some beams of its old peace seemed to touch my heart."

THE SUN INN, CANTERBURY

They all breakfasted together, full of anxiety and impatience for Mr. Micawber's appearance, which was punctually timed at the first chime of the half-hour.

This "little inn," with its gables and lattices telling of its age, still occupies the angle of the peaceful streets close to the Cathedral Close. But Dickens's designation of it is hardly fitting, for it is quite a commodious building with stabling for about a dozen horses. It is, perhaps, a trifle smaller than when Dickens knew it, for the rooms on the ground-floor corner and one side are used as a jeweller's and a butcher's shop respectively.

The inn still boasts of its "splendid accommodation for all," and is determined that its identification with Dickens should not be overlooked. On one side of the building is a hanging sign bearing the words :

THE SUN INN
BUILT 1503
THE "LITTLE INN"
OF DICKENS FAME

whilst in case this should be missed by pilgrims, it has, painted up on the wall the other side :

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

SUN HOTEL

FORMERLY KNOWN AS

“THE LITTLE INN”

MADE FAMOUS BY

CHAS. DICKENS

IN HIS TRAVELS THRO’ KENT

BUILT 1503

It would seem that the proprietor who was responsible for these words was a little uncertain of the exact association of his “Little Inn” with Dickens. But, being determined to receive some of the reflected glory of the novelist’s fame, and evidently ignorant of the book in which his “Little Inn” figured, played for safety in the use of a general, rather than a specific phrase.

The inn is worth a visit, for it is still quaint, attractive, and picturesque. Although actually built, as we are told, in 1503, we understand that it was altered in the seventeenth century. Anyway, it is sufficiently old to be in keeping with its ancient surroundings.

Turning to London, there is the Piazza Hotel in Covent Garden, mentioned by Steerforth in Chapter XXIV, where he was going to breakfast with one of his friends, which was no doubt the well-known coffee-house at the north-eastern

THE PIAZZA HOTEL, COVENT GARDEN
angle of Covent Garden Piazza. It was the favourite resort of the actors and dramatists of the period. Sheridan and John Kemble often dined together in its coffee-room, and there is a record of them disagreeing on a certain matter. Sheridan, in a letter replying to one from Kemble, told him he attributed his letter "to a disorder which I know ought not to be indulged. I prescribe that thou shalt keep thine appointment at the Piazza Coffee-House to-morrow at five, and, taking four bottles of claret instead of three, to which in sound health you might stint yourself, forget that you ever wrote the letter, as I shall that I ever received it."

Dickens stayed there himself in 1844 and again in 1846, two letters from him to his wife being dated from there.

The Piazza facade where stood the coffee-house was taken down to build the Floral Hall, which is reputed to have been modelled on the Crystal Palace.

In Chapter XXXV, David Copperfield, after a plunge in the old Roman bath in Strand Lane, went for a walk to Hampstead, and got some breakfast on the Heath. The inn where he took his repast, although not named, no doubt was Jack Straw's Castle. This is the only allusion

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

to the famous hostelry in Dickens's books that we know of, but the novelist frequented it in his earlier writing years, when he was very fond of riding and walking, and indulged those forms of recreation to his profit during that hard-worked period of his literary career.

In those brilliant days of *Pickwick* he would wander in all directions out of the London streets, and invite Forster to accompany him on these jaunts by sending him brief commands to join him. One of these ran: "You don't feel disposed, do you, to muffle yourself up and start off with me for a good brisk walk over Hampstead Heath? I know a good 'ous where we can have a red-hot chop for dinner, and a glass of good wine." And off they went, leading, as Forster says, to their "first experience of Jack Straw's Castle, memorable for many happy meetings in coming years."

On another occasion, whilst writing *The Old Curiosity Shop*, Maclise accompanied them, but this time they drove to the Heath and then walked to the "Castle." Here Dickens read to his friends a number of the new story. Again, in 1844, he wrote: "Stanfield and Mac have come in, and we are going to Hampstead to dinner. I leave Betsey Prig as you know, so don't you make a scruple about leaving Mrs. Harris. We shall

JACK STRAW'S CASTLE

stroll leisurely up, to give you time to join us, and dinner will be on the table at Jack Straw's at four." A few months later, it is recorded, they dined there again, and it is evident that the old inn was a favourite haunt of the novelist on



JACK STRAW'S CASTLE, as it was in 1835
Drawn by L. Walker from an old engraving

such occasions, and the Dickens traditions have so clung to it that during the flight of time they have become, as such traditions do, somewhat exaggerated. To-day, visitors are not only shown the chair he sat on, but have pointed out to them the bedroom he used to sleep in. There is no

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

record, however, that he ever stayed the night there, or any reason for believing that he did, seeing how easy it was for him and his friends to get there and back from town. But Jack Straw's Castle has good reasons for being proud of its literary associations; for, in addition to those of Dickens and his famous friends, such names as Washington Irving, Thackeray, Du Maurier, Lord Leighton, and a host of others may be mentioned as frequenting it. To say nothing of the fact that "The Castle" is mentioned in Richardson's *Clarissa Harlowe*.

Apart, however, from its literary associations, Jack Straw's Castle has a romantic history. It is generally agreed that its name is derived from that of the notorious peasant leader of the rising in the reign of Richard II. And this may be so in spite of the fact that its present designation is not older than the middle of the eighteenth century.

The Peasants' Revolt took place in 1381, and we are told that it is more than likely that the Hampstead villeins took part in the famous march to London. One authority says that "the St. Albans men, in their advance to join Jack Straw at his headquarters at Highbury, might or might not have passed through Hampstead. If a con-

JACK STRAW'S CASTLE

tingent of adherents was ready to join them at Hampstead, they probably took the village into their route, especially as it would give them particular pleasure to make an offensive demonstration against the Knights Hospitallers, who had a temple there and were the objects of bitter hatred. The attack of the mob upon the house of the Knights Hospitallers at Highbury is a well-known incident of the rising. Whether they visited Hampstead or not, they passed at no great distance from it—near enough to bring the Hampstead villeins within their influence. May it not be that the events of these few days provided the reason for the local name of Jack Straw's Castle? The mere fact of there being Hampstead sympathisers with Jack Straw who held their meetings at a certain house would be sufficient excuse to gain that house the title of Jack Straw's Castle."

Sir Walter Besant thought that, although there is no direct evidence of Jack Straw being connected with the hostelry named after him, "it is quite possible that the Heath formed a rendezvous for the malcontents of his time." In early days there had been an earthwork on the site, which might have given rise to the name "Castle." Referring to this point, Professor

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Hales, who leans to the opinion that Jack Straw was no more than a generic appellation, and instances the fact of there being an inn called Jack Straw's Castle in a village near Oxford, says: " ' Jack Straw's Castle ' is so commanding and important that there can be little doubt there would be erected upon it some kind of earthwork or fort at a very early period. Traces of both the Neolithic and the Bronze Age man have been found on and near the Heath, and, possibly enough, both these races raised or held on the spot some rude fortification which subsequent times would call a ' Castle.' This being so, we have only to infer, from facts already stated, that the place was used as a tryst for the local partisans of Jack Straw to arrive at the origin of the name of ' Jack Straw's Castle '—that is, the Castle of the Jack Strawites."

To-day, Jack Straw's Castle is the favoured resort of the district, and perhaps the Dickens traditions act as the strongest lodestone to visitors, and do more to sustain its popularity than any others. At any rate, the Dickensian pilgrim on his ramble through Hampstead places great store on Jack Straw's Castle for the simple and justifiable reason that it had such attractions for the great novelist.

THE SWAN, HUNGERFORD STAIRS

The "little, dirty, tumble-down public-house" at the foot of Hungerford Stairs, where the Micawber family were lodged the night before their departure for Australia, was called the Swan. It was there at the time Dickens worked in the factory as a boy, and appears in contemporary pictures of Hungerford Stairs. The Micawbers occupied one of the wooden chambers upstairs, with the tide flowing underneath. We read that Betsey Trotwood and Agnes were there, "busily making some little extra comforts in the way of dress for the children. Peggotty was quietly assisting with the old insensible work-box, yard measure, and bit of wax candle before her that had outlived so much." In that ramshackle old inn was enacted that last wonderful scene with Mr. Micawber, when he insisted on making punch in England for the last time. Having obtained the assurance that Miss Trotwood and Miss Wickfield would join him in the toast, he "immediately descended to the bar, where he appeared to be quite at home; and in due time returned with a steaming jug," and quickly served out the fragrant liquid in tin mugs for his children, and drank from his own particular pint pot himself.

There are three other inns calling for brief reference. The Gray's Inn Coffee-House, where

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David Copperfield stayed on his return from abroad, was first mentioned in *The Old Curiosity Shop*, and is dealt with in our chapter devoted to that book ; the Golden Cross at Charing Cross, a prominent feature in Chapter XIX, is commented upon at length in "The Inns and Taverns of Pickwick" ; and the coffee-house in Doctors' Commons where Mr. Spenlow conducted David Copperfield to discuss a certain delicate matter (Chapter XXXVIII) demolished in 1894.

CHAPTER X

BLEAK HOUSE, LITTLE DORRIT, HARD TIMES

SOL'S ARMS—THE DEDLOCK ARMS—THE LONDON
COFFEE-HOUSE—PEGASUS' ARMS—ETC.

THERE are very few inns of any importance mentioned in *Bleak House*, and only one that plays any prominent part in the story. The one at Barnet, where Esther Summerson hired the carriage to drive to Mr. Jarndyce's house, was no doubt meant to be the Red Lion, and is dealt with in the first chapter of the present volume ; while the White Horse Cellar, where she alighted on her entry into London from Reading, claims attention in "The Inns and Taverns of Pickwick."

Of the two other taverns, Sol's Arms, where the inquest on Nemo was held, and the Dedlock Arms at Chesney Wold, the former is the chief.

The original of Sol's Arms was the old Ship Tavern which once stood at the corner of

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Chichester Rents off Chancery Lane. It is first referred to in Chapter XI as the place of the coroner's inquest. "The coroner is to sit in the first-floor room at the Sol's Arms, where the Harmonic Meetings take place twice a week, and where the chair is filled by a gentleman of professional celebrity, faced by Little Swills the comic vocalist. . . . The Sol's Arms does a brisk stroke of business all the morning."

According to Allbut, Dickens took the name from a tavern in the Hampstead Road where the harmonic meetings of the Sol's Society were held, and it certainly seems that he adapted its characteristics to the Ship.

At the appointed hour the coroner arrived, and was conducted by the beadle and the landlord to the Harmonic Meeting Room, "where he puts his hat on the piano, and takes a Windsor chair at the head of the long table, formed of several short tables put together, and ornamented with glutinous rings in endless involutions, made by the pots and glasses. As many of the jury as can crowd together at the tables sit there. The rest get among the spittoons and pipes, or lean against the piano."

All in readiness, the famous inquest on Nemo, with poor Joe as a witness, took place, after which

THE SOL'S ARMS, CHICHESTER RENTS

the Sol's Arms gradually "melts into the shadowy night, and then flares out of it strong in gas."

That was a special event for the Sol's Arms, which generally speaking was just a tavern frequented by lawyers' clerks and the inhabitants of Chichester Rents and its neighbourhood. It, no doubt, was Krook's habitual place of call, it certainly was patronized by Mrs. Piper and Mrs. Perkins, and Mr. Guppy must often have looked in ; but its chief claim to fame was its being the meeting place of the Harmonic Company, of whom Little Swills was so distinguished a member.

Although Chichester Rents, which exists to-day, is not the same Chichester Rents as when the Old Ship Tavern was there, and Krook lived there, with Miss Flite as a lodger, one is easily reminded of these things, and of the inquest, of Poor Joe, and of the great Little Swills, when one wanders through this district of Dickens Land.

It is common knowledge that Chesney Wold, the country seat of the Dedlocks of the story, was Rockingham Castle, the home of the Hon. Richard Watson and Mrs. Watson, to whom Dickens dedicated *David Copperfield*. There is, therefore, no difficulty in tracing the Dedlock Arms. The village of Chesney Wold was the village of Rockingham. In Rockingham is an old inn bearing

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the date of 1763, known as Sonde's Arms, which stands for the Dedlock Arms of the story.

Little Dorrit is almost as devoid of reference to inns and taverns that count as *Bleak House*. In few cases the references are as a rule but passing ones. Perhaps the most interesting is to the Coffee-House on Ludgate Hill, where Arthur Clennam stayed, for it remains almost as it was in those days.

In the third chapter of the first book, Dickens gives one of those telling pen-pictures of London for which he had no rival. It is of rather a dull and doleful hue, and depicts the aspect the city presents on a Sunday : " gloomy, close and stale." Arthur Clennam had just arrived from Marseilles by way of Dover and its coach " The Blue-Eyed Maid," and " sat in the window of a coffee-house on Ludgate Hill, counting one of the neighbouring bells, making sentences and burdens of songs out of it in spite of himself, and wondering how many sick people it might be the death of in the course of the year. At the quarter, it went off into a condition of deadly-lively importunity, urging the populace in a voluble manner to Come to church, Come to church, Come to church ! At the ten minutes, it became aware that the congregation would be scanty, and slowly hammered out in low



THE LONDON COFFEE-HOUSE, LUDGATE HILL
From an old Engraving

THE LONDON COFFEE-HOUSE

spirits, They *won't* come, they *won't* come, they *won't* come ! At the five minutes it abandoned hope, and shook every house in the neighbourhood for three hundred seconds, with one dismal swing per second, as a groan of despair. 'Thank heaven !' said Clennam when the hour struck, and the bell stopped."

The particular coffee-house in whose window Clennam sat was the famous old London Coffee-House, and the particular church whose bells prompted his reflections, so microscopically described by the novelist, must have been St. Martin's next door. There can be little doubt of this, for we are told that Clennam "sat in the same place as the day died, looking at the dull houses opposite, and thinking, if the disembodied spirits of former inhabitants were ever conscious of them, how they must pity themselves for their old places of imprisonment. . . . Presently the rain began to fall in slanting lines between him and those houses, and people began to collect under cover of the public passage opposite, and to look hopelessly at the sky as the rain dropped thicker and faster."

That "public passage opposite" must have been what is now the entrance to Ludgate Square.

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

With these facts to guide us, we can supply the name and location of the coffee-house on Ludgate Hill. It exists to-day, nestling close to St. Martin's Church, on the west side, and, but for the substitution of a plate-glass shop-front, is to all intents and purposes unchanged in its outward appearances from what it was when Clennam sat in meditation at one of its windows.

The illustration from an old engraving by S. Jenkins, after a drawing by G. Shepherd, shows the coffee-house and church as they were in 1814; and, if comparison of the picture of the former building is made with the present structure, it will be seen that it is practically identical, except so far as the ground floor is concerned.

The house was first opened as a coffee-house in 1731 by one James Ashley, and its vast cellars stretched under Ludgate Hill to the foundations of the city walls. In those days, it was "within the Rules of the Fleet Prison, and was noted for the sales held there of booksellers' stocks and literary copyrights," and used to afford hospitality to the juries from the Old Bailey sessions when they disagreed. The grandfather of John Leech, the illustrator of *A Christmas Carol* was the landlord of the tavern for some years, and later the father of the famous *Punch* artist became the

THE GEORGE INN, BOROUGH

tenant, and filled it with the merry crowd associated with Mr. Punch's early days. Leech was followed as landlord by Mr. Lovegrove from the Horn Tavern in Doctors' Commons.

There is a casual mention of the famous old George Inn in the Borough High Street, in Chapter XXII of Book I of *Little Dorrit*, where Tip Dorrit is spoken of as going into the inn to write a letter ; and also passing references to Garraway's and the Jerusalem Coffee-House, as occasional resorts of Mr. Flintwinch. Full details concerning the George and Garraway's will be found in "The Inns and Taverns of Pickwick."

The Jerusalem Coffee House was one of the oldest in the city of London, and was famous for its news-rooms, where merchants and captains connected with the commerce of India, China and Australia could see and consult the files of all the most important papers from those countries, as well as the chief shipping lists.

The hotel in Brook Street, Grosvenor Square, where Mr. Dorrit stayed when he reached London from the Continent, was probably Mivart's, and is dealt with in the chapter devoted to Nicholas Nickleby.

Coketown, of *Hard Times*, is generally supposed to be Manchester. We suspect it to be a composite

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

picture, with a good deal of Preston in it, and other manufacturing towns as well. It is not possible, therefore, to identify the one or two inns which figure in the story.

The hotel where Mr. James Harthouse stayed when he went there with an introduction to Mr. Bounderby might be any hotel in any town ; and there seems no means of tracing the original of the " mean little public-house with red lights in it " at Pod's End, where Sissy Jupe brought Gradgrind and Bounderby. Dickens describes it " as haggard and as shabby as if, for want of custom, it had itself taken to drinking and had gone the way all drunkards go, and was very near the end of it."

The name he gives to the public-house was the Pegasus' Arms. The Pegasus' leg, he informs us, might have been more to the purpose ; but, underneath the winged horse upon the sign-board, the Pegasus' Arms was inscribed in Roman letters. Beneath that inscription, again, in a flowing scroll, the painter had touched off the lines :

Good malt makes good beer,
Walk in, and they'll draw it here ;
Good wine makes good brandy,
Give us a call, and you'll find it handy.

THE PEGASUS' ARMS

These lines were taken from an old inn-sign,
the Malt Shovel, which once stood at the foot of
Chatham Hill.

CHAPTER XI

A TALE OF TWO CITIES AND GREAT EXPECTATIONS

THE ROYAL GEORGE, DOVER—YE OLD CHESHIRE
CHEESE — THE THREE JOLLY BARGEMEN — THE
CROSS KEYS, WOOD STREET—HUMMUM'S, COVENT
GARDEN—THE SHIP AND LOBSTER, GRAVESEND—
THE FOX UNDER THE HILL, DENMARK HILL

NOTWITHSTANDING the fact that *A Tale of Two Cities* is to some persons Dickens's best book, or the one that many prefer to any other, it is the most barren for our purpose. Apart from the fact that its scenes are laid chiefly in another country, those that concern our own supply little enough material in the way of taverns that can be identified.

In Chapter IV of Book I, Dickens gives a fine description of the London Mail Coach's journey to Dover, but no incident associated with an inn is touched upon on the way, and not until the

THE SHIP HOTEL, DOVER

journey is terminated at Dover is an inn mentioned by name.

“ When the mail got successfully to Dover, in the course of the forenoon,” we are told, “ the head drawer at the Royal George Hotel opened the coach door, as his custom was. He did it with some flourish of ceremony, for a mail journey from London in winter was an achievement to congratulate an adventurous traveller upon.”

Here Mr. Lorry, the only passenger left, shaking himself of straw, alighted from the coach and engaged a room for the night, where he awaited the arrival of Lucy Manette for the momentous interview which was to terminate in their voyage to Calais.

We cannot, however, discover that there was any hotel with the name of the Royal George in Dover at that or any other period ; but Robert Allbut, hunting for one to serve its purpose, hit upon the King's Head Hotel, which he says was the old coaching-house for the London Mail, and therefore must have been the hostelry Dickens had in mind. Other authorities mention the Ship, long since disappeared, upon whose site now stands the Lord Warden Hotel, where Dickens often stayed himself, and occasionally mentions in his writings. Taking into consideration the date of

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the story, one may rightly assume that the Ship was the hotel at which Mr. Lorry's coach deposited him. It was the Ship no doubt that Byron sang of in the following verse :

Thy cliffs, dear Dover ! harbour and hotel ;
Thy custom-house, with all its delicate duties ;
Thy waiters running mucks at every bell ;
Thy packets, all whose passengers are booties
To those who upon land or water dwell ;
And last, not least, to strangers uninstructed,
Thy long, long bills, whence nothing is deducted.

But it has long ago gone, and in its place the fashionable Lord Warden now stands.

Ye Old Cheshire Cheese, that popular tavern in Fleet Street, was never, we believe, ever mentioned in any one of Dickens's books by name, nor can we discover that it was alluded to or described even under an assumed name. It is known that he visited it, and the menu card bearing a picture of what is known as Dr. Johnson's room, with Dickens and Thackeray seated at the table presided over by the shade of the lexicographer itself, is familiar to visitors.

Dickens students, however, are of opinion that the Cheshire Cheese is the tavern where Charles Darnay and Sydney Carton dined after the trial at the Old Bailey, described in Chapter



THE OLD CHESHIRE CHEESE

THE CHESHIRE CHEESE

IV of Book 2. The evidence offered for this is as follows :

Darnay tells Carton that he is faint for want of food.

“ Then why the devil don’t you dine ? I dined myself while those numskulls were deliberating which world you should belong to—this, or some other.” “ Let me show you the nearest tavern to dine well in,” replied Carton.

“ Drawing his arm through his own, he took him down Ludgate Hill to Fleet Street, and so, up a covered way, into a tavern. Here they were shown a little room, where Charles Darnay was soon recruiting his strength with a good plain dinner and good wine : while Carton sat opposite to him at the same table, with his separate bottle of port before him, and his full half-insolent manner upon him.”

The Cheshire Cheese no doubt was the tavern Dickens was thinking of when he wrote the foregoing passages. It certainly was the resort of the literary and legal professions in those days, as it has been since. It is too well known to warrant any detailed account of it here. Besides, its two-and-a-half-century history is too packed with anecdote and story to allow of adequate description in our limited space. An excellent book is issued

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

by the proprietors fully dealing with its past, and copiously illustrated.

There seems to be a growing desire on the part of Dickens students to prove that Cooling, the hamlet in Kent near to Gads Hill is not the spot where are laid certain scenes of *Great Expectations*, in spite of the fact that Dickens told Forster it was. We do not propose to argue the matter here. The chief point at issue seems to be that there is no blacksmith's forge at Cooling, whereas there is at Chalk and at Hoo, two other villages in the district that claim the honour. Yet at Chalk there are no "graveyard lozenges," but at Hoo we believe there happens to be both lozenges in the churchyard and a forge in the village.

On the other hand, we are told there *was* a blacksmith's forge at Cooling in Dickens's time. If, therefore, we accept Cooling as Joe Gargery's village, the Horseshoe and Castle Inn there would stand for the Three Jolly Bargemen where Joe Gargery and Pip used to while away certain hours of the evening, as described in Chapter X of the book.

It is first referred to on the occasion when Pip had promised "at his peril" to bring Joe home from it. "There was a bar at the Jolly Barge-

THE THREE JOLLY BARGEMEN

men," Pip tells us, "with some alarmingly long chalk scores in it on the wall at the side of the door" which seemed never to be paid off. They had been there ever since he could remember, and had grown more than he had. There was a common-room at the end of the passage with a bright large kitchen fire, where Joe smoked his pipe in company with Mr. Wopsle. It was here that Pip again encountered his convict who stirred his drink with the file Pip had borrowed for him earlier in the story, and where he was presented with a shilling wrapped in "two fat sweltering one-pound notes that seemed to have been on terms of the warmest intimacy with all the cattle markets in the country."

It is the scene of many incidents in the story. Indeed, it was the meeting place of all the men of the village, to whom Mr. Wopsle read the news round the fire, and where all the gossip of the district was retailed.

The Horseshoe and Castle is a typical village inn, in all appearances like a doll's house, built of wood in a quite plain fashion, lying a little back from the road. It was in this inn that Mr. Jaggers unexpectedly appeared one day enquiring for Pip, which ultimately resulted in the change in Pip's fortune and his journey to London.

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

Pip's journey from "our town," as he calls it, to the Metropolis, was, we read, "a journey of about five hours. It was a little past midday when the four-horse stage-coach by which I was passenger got into the ravel of traffic frayed out about the Cross Keys, Wood Street, Cheapside, London."

This incident of the early life of Pip, related in 1860, was a reminiscence of Dickens's early childhood, which he recalls in *The Uncommercial Traveller*, when he tells us that, as a small boy, he "left Dullborough in the days when there were no railroads in the land," and he left it in a stage-coach. "Through all the years that have since passed," he goes on, "have I ever lost the smell of the damp straw in which I was packed—like game—and forwarded, carriage paid, to the Cross Keys, Wood Street, Cheapside, London . . . The coach that carried me away was melodiously called Timpson's Blue-Eyed Maid, and belonged to Timpson at the coach office up street." In speaking of Dullborough and "our town," it is known that Dickens was referring to Rochester.

The Cross Keys was a notable coaching inn of those days, and the Rochester coaches started and ended their journey there. It was demolished

HUMMUM'S, COVENT GARDEN

over fifty years ago. Although Dickens does not give us one of his pleasant pen-pictures of it, he refers to it occasionally in other of his stories, such as *Little Dorrit* and *Nicholas Nickleby*.

Another one-time famous London inn, referred to in *Great Expectations*, but no longer existing, is Hummum's, in Covent Garden.

When Pip received that note one evening on reaching the gateway of the Temple, warning him not to go home, he hired a chariot and drove to Hummum's, Covent Garden. He spent a very miserable night there. In those times, he tells us, "a bed was always to be got there at any hour of the night, and the chamberlain, letting me in at his ready wicket, lighted the candle next in order on his shelf, and showed me straight into the bedroom next in order. It was a sort of vault on the ground floor at the back, with a despotic monster of a four-post bed in it, straddling over the whole place, putting one of its arbitrary legs into the fire-place, and another into the doorway, and squeezing the wretched little washing-stand in quite a Divinely Righteous manner."

He goes on to wail of his doleful night. The room smelt of cold soot and hot dust, the tester was covered in blue-bottle flies, which he thought must be lying up for next summer. "When I had

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

lain awake a little while. those extraordinary voices, with which silence teems, began to make themselves audible. The closet whispered, the fire-place sighed, the little washing-stand ticked, and one guitar-string played occasionally in the chest of drawers."

He then thought of the unknown gentleman who once came to Hummum's in the night and had gone to bed and destroyed himself and had been found in the morning weltering in his blood. Altogether a dismal, doleful and miserable experience of Hummum's. But no doubt Pip's liver or nerves were the cause of it, not the hotel.

Another reference to it is made in *Sketches by Boz* in the chapter describing the streets in the morning. Speaking of the pandemonium which reigns in Covent Garden at an early hour after daybreak, the talking, shouting, horses neighing, donkeys braying, Dickens says "these and a hundred other sounds form a compound discordant enough to a Londoner's ears, and remarkably disagreeable to those of country gentlemen who are sleeping at Hummum's for the first time."

There is an hotel standing in Covent Garden with the same name to-day, but, although it is on the same spot, it is not the Hummum's of which

THE SHIP AND LOBSTER, GRAVESEND

Pip speaks. That was demolished long ago, and was the scene of a marvellous ghost story told in Boswell's Johnson concerning Parson Ford.

The Ship at Gravesend, mentioned as the water-side inn where Pip and his assistants managed to row the convict Magwitch, with the idea of



THE SHIP AND LOBSTER. GRAVESEND

Drawn by C. G. Harper

smuggling him out of the country, is known as the Ship and Lobster.

Having run alongside a little causeway made of stones, Pip left the rest of the occupants of the boat and stepped ashore, and found the light they had observed from the river to be in the window of a public-house. "It was a dirty place enough,

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

and I daresay not unknown to smuggling adventurers; but there was a good fire in the kitchen, and there were eggs and bacon to eat and various liquors to drink. Also there were two double-bedded rooms — ‘such as they were,’ the landlord said. . . . We made a very good meal by the kitchen fire, and then apportioned the bedrooms. . . . We found that the air was carefully excluded from both as if air was fatal to life; and there were more dirty clothes and bandboxes under the beds than I should have thought the family possessed. But we considered ourselves well off, notwithstanding, for a more solitary place we could not have found.”

Outside this inn Magwitch was again captured, and transferred to a galley, where Pip eventually joined him and accompanied him to his destination.

Dickens knew Gravesend well, and his description of the Ship and Lobster is a faithful one. It is situated on the shore at Denton, a village adjoining the town, not far from the official Lighterman’s at Denton Wharf. At one time it flourished as a popular tea-garden resort.

There are two other inns in the book that must not be overlooked. The Blue Boar at Rochester,

THE FOX UNDER THE HILL

where Pip stayed when he visited his old town, which was the Bull Inn there, and is dealt with in "The Inns and Taverns of Pickwick"; and the tavern where Wemmick's wedding-breakfast was held. This is said to be the Fox under the Hill, nearly at the top of Denmark Hill. It is now a modern public-house, but sixty or seventy years ago it was an old wayside inn—a pleasant little tavern, and a favourite resort, especially on Sunday evenings in the summer, for the youthful population of Walworth and Camberwell.

We close this chapter with the brief account of the festive occasion :

"Breakfast had been ordered at a pleasant little tavern, a mile or so away upon the rising ground beyond the green* and there was a bagatelle board in the room, in case we should desire to unbend our minds after the solemnity. It was pleasant to observe that Mrs. Wemmick no longer unwound Wemmick's arm when it adapted itself to her figure, but sat in a high-backed chair against the wall, like a violoncello in its case, and submitted to be embraced as that melodious instrument might have done. We had an excellent breakfast, and, when anyone declined anything on the table, Wemmick said, 'Provided by

* Camberwell Green.

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

contract you know ; don't be afraid of it !' I drank to the new couple, drank to the Aged, drank to the Castle, saluted the bride at parting, and made myself as agreeable as I could."

CHAPTER XII

OUR MUTUAL FRIEND

THE SIX JOLLY FELLOWSHIP-PORTERS —THE THREE
MAGPIES —THE SHIP, GREENWICH --THE WHITE
LION --- THE ANGLERS' INN -- THE EXCHEQUER
COFFEE-HOUSE

THE outstanding tavern in *Our Mutual Friend* is that with the pleasant-sounding name of The Six Jolly Fellowship-Porters, the favoured resort of Rogue Riderhood, Gaffer Hexam, and their boon companions, which is so closely associated with the unravelling of the mystery of John Harmon. It exists to-day as the Grapes, and continues to be the favoured resort of river watermen whose business keeps or brings them to the picturesque Reach.

When Dickens was engaged on his book, it is said that he wrote some chapters in a house adjoining the Grapes, overlooking the river. The Dropsical Tavern, as he calls it, was then known

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

as the Bunch of Grapes, which, by a process of clipping, became first the Grapes Inn, and then finally the Grapes, by which it is known at the present time. Its front entrance is at 76 Narrow Street, Limehouse, and occupies little more space (as noted by the novelist) than to allow for its front door. Although the front of the building has been modernised, it still remains as narrow and tall as when Dickens likened it to "a handle of a flat iron set upright on its broadest end." The inn has been very little altered in other respects since he so minutely described it. Certainly, an ordinary public-house bar has cut off a portion of the original bar, and, if in those days "the available space in it was not much larger than a hackney-coach," its area is even smaller to-day, but yet quite comfortable enough to "soften the human breast."

It is in describing this bar that Dickens gives the clue to the identification of the tavern. "No one," he says, "could have wished the bar bigger, that space was so girt in by corpulent little casks, and by cordial bottles radiant with fictitious *grapes in bunches*, and by lemons in nets, and by biscuits in baskets, and by polite beer-pulls that made low bows when customers were served with beer . . . and by the landlady's own small table

THE SIX JOLLY FELLOWSHIP-PORTERS

in a snugger corner near the fire. . . .” Many of these alluring etceteras have given place to others, perhaps less enticing, and among those that have gone are the cordial bottles with the “grapes in bunches” on them. We have learned, however, from the present genial hostess, Mrs. Higgins, that at one time, not only did the cordial bottles bear the engraved sign of a bunch of grapes, but certain of the windows also were so embellished, and it was only a few years ago, when the front was altered, that these disappeared.

It is not, however, necessary merely to rely on this piece of identification to assure us that the Grapes Inn was the original of the Six Jolly Fellowship-Porters, for a visit to it with Chapter VI of *Our Mutual Friend* for a guidance leaves no doubt in the mind. Therein we read that “the Six Jolly Fellowship-Porters, already mentioned as a tavern of a dropsical appearance, had long settled down into a state of hale infirmity. In its whole constitution it had not a straight floor, and hardly a straight line ; but it had outlasted, and clearly would yet outlast, many a better-trimmed building, many a sprucer public-house. Externally, it was a narrow, lopsided wooden jumble of corpulent windows heaped one upon another as you might heap as many toppling oranges, with

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

a crazy wooden verandah impending over the water ; indeed, the whole house, inclusive of the complaining flag-staff on the roof, impended over the water, but seemed to have got into the condition of a faint-hearted diver who has paused so long on the brink that he will never go in at all."

That is how Dickens describes the river frontage of the Six Jolly Fellowship-Porters, and his words apply just as accurately to the Grapes Inn. As one stands on the crazy wooden verandah, which is reached from the foreshore by steep wooden steps, one can call to mind the scene in the book describing Gaffer Hexam landing the "found drowned," and then, by turning into the "tap and parlour" behind, "which gave on to the river, and had red curtains to match the noses of the regular customers," one finds oneself in the room where the inquest on John Harmon was held, with Gaffer Hexam as witness before the coroner's jury, Mr. Mortimer Lightwood as "eminent solicitor," and Mr. Inspector watching the proceedings on behalf of the Home Office. The room is not used for such purposes to-day, but is put to the more pleasant one of social intercourse between workers on the great waterway during and after their labours, who, if you are so disposed,



THE GRAPES INN, LIMEHOUSE
Photograph by T. W. Tyrrell

THE SIX JOLLY FELLOWSHIP-PORTERS

will welcome you there, and discourse on the mystery of tides and ships. If you accept them as fellow-creatures you may be invited to a game of darts, meanwhile regaling yourself with the modern substitutes for "those delectable drinks" known in the days when Miss Abbey Potterson reigned supreme on her throne as sole proprietor and manager of the Fellowship-Porters, as Purl, Flip, and Dog's Nose. These watermen reach this haven, if the tide is out, by means of the wooden steps; when the tide is high and the house is "all but afloat," the small row-boats are brought into use and the occupants approach the inn like veritable gondoliers and moor their craft outside whilst they refresh themselves within.

Beyond this room is the small one which served as Miss Abbey Potterson's haven. "This haven," Dickens says, "was divided from the rough world by a glass partition and a half-door with a leaden sill upon it for the convenience of resting your liquor; but over this half-door the bar's snugness so gushed forth that, albeit customers drank there standing, in a dark and draughty passage where they were shouldered by other customers passing in and out, they always appeared to drink under an enchanting delusion that they were in the bar itself."

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

The glass partition and the half-door, over which Gaffer Hexam is seen leaning in Marcus Stone's picture in the book, is still there, but is not now used for the same purpose. It is the private entrance to the back of the modern public bar.

What Dickens said of the antiquity of the Fellowship-Porters is true of the Grapes Inn. "The wood forming the chimney-pieces, beams, partitions, floors, and doors of the Six Jolly Fellowship-Porters seemed in its old age fraught with confused memories of its youth. In many places it had become gnarled and riven, according to the manner of old trees; knots started out of it, and here and there it seemed to twist itself into some likeness of boughs. In this state of second childhood, it had an air of being in its own way garrulous about its early life. Not without reason was it often asserted by the regular frequenters of the Porters that, when the light shone full upon the grain of certain panels, and particularly upon an old corner cupboard of walnut wood in the bar, you might trace little forests there, and tiny trees like the parent tree in full umbrageous leaf." Unfortunately, most of these oak panels and beams are now hidden from view by varnished matchboarding, but some of the panels and some of the

THE SIX JOLLY FELLOWSHIP-PORTERS

beams remain exposed to confirm Dickens's fanciful picture.

Miss Abbey Potterson, the mistress of this establishment, was "a tall, upright, well-favoured woman, though severe of countenance, and had more the air of a schoolmistress than mistress of the Six Jolly Fellowship-Porters." Here she ruled supreme, and at the closing time she ordered one after the other to leave with such admonitions as "George Jones, your time is up! I told your wife you should be punctual," and so all wished Miss Abbey good night and Miss Abbey wished good night to all. She knew how to manage the rough class of river-men who frequented her house, and was the more respected for it. "Being known on her own authority as Miss Abbey Potterson," Dickens tells us, "some waterside heads, which (like the water) were none of the clearest, harboured muddled motions that, because of her dignity and firmness, she was named after, or in some sort related to, the Abbey at Westminster. But Abbey was only short for Abigail, by which name Miss Potterson had been christened at Limehouse Church some sixty years and odd before."

Without recording all the references in the book to the Fellowship-Porters, we note that, towards

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the end of it, John and Bella paid an official visit to the police station and visited afterwards the Six Jolly Fellowship-Porters with Mr. Inspector for purposes of identification. During this visit, Mr. Inspector gives this very good character to the inn, "a better-kept house is not known to our men. What do I say? Half so well a kept house is not known to our men. Show the Force the Six Jolly Fellowship-Porters, and the Force—to a constable—will show you a piece of perfection." This, no doubt, was Dickens's own opinion, too.

The Grapes to-day serves the same purpose as did the Six Jolly Fellowship-Porters in the story, and is of as good repute. It is the house of call of the watermen from the river in the day-time and from the road after work is done, and it seems to be conducted by the present hostess much as it was by Miss Abbey Potterson, not so rigidly perhaps, but with the same good-natured friendliness which is reflected in the attitude and behaviour of all the frequenters. There does not even seem the necessity for a Bob Glibbery; at any rate, we have not met his successor on the occasions of our visits there. Nor does his room down "towards the bed of the river," where he was ordered to proceed to his supper, exist at the



LIMEHOUSE REACH
Drawn by L. Welker

THE SIX JOLLY FELLOWSHIP-PORTERS

present time. That must have been somewhere contiguous to the secret smuggling arches which ran under the building from the river, now filled in.

The Grapes Inn is a place to visit. If one can choose a fine summer's evening to sit under "the corpulent windows" on the "crazy wooden verandah" and watch the busy river with its myriads of craft floating by, one can enjoy the view and atmosphere much as did Whistler, Napier Hemy, and Dickens himself.

In J. Ashby Sterry's "A River Rhymer," is a set of verses entitled "Down Limehouse Way," two of which may be appropriately quoted here :

Close by I mind an inn you'll find,
Where you will not refuse
To rest a bit, as there you sit,
And gaze on river views—
'Tis very old—with windows bold,
That bulges o'er the tide ;
Whence you can spy ships passing by
Or watch the waters glide !
You can sit in the red-curtained bay
And think, while you're puffing a clay,
'Tis no indecorum
To drink sangarorum—
While musing down Lime'us way !

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You'll find this spot—now does it not
Recall and keep alive
The varied crew Charles Dickens drew
In eighteen sixty-five ?
Here Hexam plied his trade and died,
And Riderhood conspired ;
While things they'd pop at Pleasant's shop,
When cash might be required !
Here under Miss Abbey's firm sway,
Who made all her clients obey,
Was ruled with discretion
And rare self-possession
The " Porters " down Lime'us way !

The name of the Fellowship-Porters which Dickens adopted for the sign of Miss Abbey Potterson's public-house was that of one of the old City Guilds. For over 800 years the City of London successfully claimed and exercised the sole right to unload grain vessels arriving in the Thames, and realised enormous revenues from the privilege. In 1155, the Guild or Brotherhood of Fellowship-Porters was incorporated and a charter was granted. It was reincorporated in 1613, and appointed by the City to carry or store corn, salt, coals, fish, and fruit of all kinds.

The Fellowship-Porters at one time numbered 3,000 members, and the Guild had the power granted by act of Council in 1646 to choose twelve rulers, the Lord Mayor and Aldermen reserving

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the right to appoint one of the number. The company had a hall of its own which stood near to the Waterman's Hall in St. Mary's Hill, Billingsgate, but had no livery or arms, and ranked the nineteenth in the order of procedure. Membership carried with it the freedom of the City by payment of £2 18s. 6d., and five guineas to Fellowship Hall—these fees being demanded before they could work as dock labourers. When Millwall Docks were built, the City challenged the docks on the matter of their privilege, and the case went to the Law Courts. It was then discovered that the Charter could not be produced, it having been destroyed by the Great Fire of London, so it was supposed. This blow ruined the Guild, and some thirty years ago the organization was wound up, the then present members being deprived of work, pensions, and everything else their Charter entitled them to as Freemen of the City.

Another notable tavern in *Our Mutual Friend* is the Ship, at Greenwich, where two memorable little dinners were given. The first was the occasion when, Bella Wilfer having been presented with a purse and a fifty-pound bank-note by Mr. Boffin, took her dear old father, the cherub, to Greenwich by boat on a secret expedition, as she called it, and entertained him to dinner there.

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First calling for her father at his City office, where the messenger described her to her father as "a slap-up gal in a bang-up chariot," she handed him the purse with instructions, not to be disregarded, to "go to the nearest place where they keep everything of the very very best, ready made ; you buy and put on the most beautiful suit of clothes, the most beautiful hat, and the most beautiful pair of bright boots (patent leather, Pa, mind !) that are to be got for money ; and you come back to me." After half an hour he came back "so brilliantly transformed that Bella was obliged to walk round him in ecstatic admiration twenty times before she could draw her arm through his and delightfully squeeze it."

She then ordered him to "take this lovely woman out to dinner." The question came, "Where shall we go, my dear ? " "Greenwich !" said Bella valiantly. "And be sure you treat this lovely woman with everything of the best." And off they went in quest of the boat to take them down the river, and eventually arrived at the Ship Tavern. The little expedition down the river to reach it, we are told, "was delightful, and the little room overlooking the river into which they were shown for dinner was delightful.

THE SHIP, GREENWICH

Everything was delightful. The park was delightful, the lunch was delightful, the dishes of fish were delightful, the wine was delightful. Bella was more delightful than any other item in the festival." And, as they sat together looking at the ships and steamboats making their way to the sea with the tide that was running down, "the lovely woman imagined all sorts of voyages for herself and Pa." So enchanted did Pa become that he was as willing "to put his head into the Sultan's tub of water as the beggar-boys below the window were to put *theirs* in the mud"; and so the happy moments flew by and the time came to ring the bell, and pay the waiter, and return to London.

Later on in the same identical room in the same identical tavern overlooking the Thames, the same delightful couple, with John Rokesmith, partook of another delightful dinner. Earlier in the day Bella Wilfer had become Mrs. John Rokesmith and celebrated the event with breakfast at Bella's cottage at Blackheath, and with a dinner at the Ship Tavern later, Bella's father being the only other guest.

"What a dinner! Specimens of all the fishes that swim in the sea surely had swum their way to it, and, if samples of the fishes of divers colours

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that made a speech in the ‘Arabian Nights,’ and then jumped out of the frying pan, were not to be recognised, it was only because they had all become of one hue by being cooked in the batter among the whitebait. And the dishes being seasoned with Bliss—an article which they are sometimes out of at Greenwich—were of perfect flavour, and the golden drinks had been bottled in the golden age and hoarding up their sparkles ever since.”

The whole function was a sheer delight, a crowning success ; but the full appreciation of its charm cannot be indicated by short quotations ; it must be read in detail to be thoroughly enjoyed. The scene inspired J. Ashby Sterry to again drop into poetry :

A wedding banquet here must dwell
Within one's brightest recollection ;
Where Bella, John and Pa, as well,
Made merry o'er the choice refection !
The sparkling wine, the happy pair,
With all their aged affection ;
The bland “ Archbishop's ” tender care,
And Rumpy Wilfer's smart oration !—
A scene where fun and pathos blend,
With all the heart and truth that lend
A charm unto “ Our Mutual Friend ! ”

Alas ! the tavern in which these happy hours



THE SHIP HOTEL, GREENWICH
Drawn by L. Walker

THE SHIP, GREENWICH

were spent is a thing of the past, but its prosperous and palmy days are recorded in Time's annals.

In the days when Greenwich was famous for its whitebait dinners, the town was noted for its hotels overlooking the waterside. The chief of these was the Ship, whilst another notable one was the Trafalgar, hard by, patronised by members of the Cabinet of the day, who led the fashion in these functions; it being "the correct thing" then, when a little special festivity was forward, to resort to one of these inns at Greenwich for the purpose, it is not surprising to learn that on several occasions Dickens and his literary and artistic coterie followed the custom by arranging social gatherings in celebration of some event connected with one of the company either at the Ship or the Trafalgar. As early as 1837 we find him suggesting Greenwich for a friendly meeting-place.

But there were two very noteworthy occasions associated with Dickens when Greenwich was selected for jovial and pleasant parties of close friends. The first of these took place on the novelist's return from America in 1842, when a few of his kindred spirits adopted this method for welcoming him back to England. Among the

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

company were Talfourd, Tom Hood, Monckton Milnes, B. W. Procter, D. Maclise, R.A., Clarkson Stanfield, R.A., Captain Marryat, "Ingoldsby" Barham, George Cruikshank, and John Forster. "I wish you had been at Greenwich the other day," he wrote to Felton, "where a party of friends gave me a private dinner; public ones I have refused. C—— was perfectly wild at the reunion, and, after singing all manner of marine songs, wound up the entertainment by coming home (six miles) in a little open phaeton of mine, *on his head*, to the mingled delight and indignation of the metropolitan police. We were very jovial, indeed."

On the other occasion Dickens was the instigator of the feast. This was in 1843, when, on the retirement of John Black from the editorial chair of the old *Chronicle*, the novelist arranged a dinner in honour of his old friend at Greenwich, on the 20th of May. Dickens ordered all things to perfection and the dinner succeeded in its purpose, as in other ways, quite wonderfully, Forster tells us. Among the entertainers were Sheil and Thackeray, Fonblanque and Charles Buller, Southwood Smith and William Johnson Fox, Macready and Maclise, as well as Forster and Dickens.

THE SHIP, GREENWICH

These dinners took place at the Ship or the Trafalgar, both well known to the novelist, as was Greenwich generally, for he frequently refers to the ancient town and its customs in his writings.

The Ship Tavern was originally built with a weather-board front, overlooking the river. But, about the middle of the last century, the newer and much handsomer structure as seen in our illustration, was erected upon the site of the original one, and its pretty garden was the scene of many gay parties, whilst its rooms often rang with merriment from the festive diners. After the waning of the fashion for whitebait banquets, it long maintained its popularity with visitors to the Thames historic town.

Our Mutual Friend is essentially a story of the Thames, and certainly the inns and taverns of the book are either on the water's edge or in close proximity to it. The two already dealt with are below London Bridge, in the midst of the busy traffic of trade, whilst the remainder are situated in its more picturesque district where pleasure is sought.

It will be recalled that, when Mrs. Boffin and the secretary set out in search of the charming orphan recommended by the Rev. Frank Milvey,

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

they hired a phaeton and made their way to the abode of Mrs. Betty Higden in whose care was the child. They discovered that old lady in complicated back settlements of "Muddy Brentford," and, having left their equipage at the sign of the Three Magpies, continued their quest on foot. A second visit to Brentford is recorded later in the book, on which occasion a carriage was ordered, for Bella and Sloppy were also of the party. "So to the Three Magpies as before; where Mrs. Boffin and Miss Bella were handed out, and whence they all went on foot to Mrs. Betty Higden's."

No other allusion to the inn is made than the bare mention of the name; but the original inn to which Dickens alludes undoubtedly is the Three Pigeons, that ancient hostelry at Brentford whose history is associated with Shakespeare, Ben Jonson and their contemporaries, many of whom referred to it in their plays and essays. In Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*, it will be remembered, Tony Lumpkin sings a song in praise of it, whilst two scenes of the comedy take place in the inn.

Lowen, a leading actor in Shakespeare's company, we are told, kept the inn at the time, and Shakespeare personally instructed him in Henry

THE RED LION, HAMPTON

VIII. It was a well-known coaching inn then, and at one time its stables occupied several acres.

In 1905 it was partially reconstructed, and in 1916 it was closed under order of the licensing justices of Middlesex.



THE RED LION HOTEL, HAMPTON

Drawn by C. G. Harper

In the chapter describing the flight of Betty Higden we are told that her pilgrimage took her through Chertsey, Walton, Kingston, and Staines, and so on to her journey's end. One day she was sitting in a market-place on a bench outside an inn. Here she became nervous of those who

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

questioned her, and determined to move on. As she left the spot she had looked over her shoulder before turning out of the town, and had seen the "sign of the White Lion hanging across the road, and the fluttering market booths and the old grey church, and the little crowd gazing after her, but not attempting to follow her."

Although the name of this town is not mentioned, there is no doubt that the description is of Hampton, and that the inn is the Red Lion, whose picturesque sign still spans the street, with the view of the "old grey church" behind it.

The scenes of the fourth book bring us to the district of Henley, although the name is never mentioned and the locks and inns are given fictitious names. But it has not been difficult to locate the spots from the novelist's accurate descriptions. The only inn which plays an important part in the unravelling of the story in this neighbourhood is given the name of the Anglers' Inn. All authorities identify this as the Red Lion, Henley. It was here that Eugene Wrayburn found accommodation when in pursuit of Lizzie Hexam. The inn is on the west bank of the river and north of the bridge, and, being a favourite resort of anglers, the name Dickens gives it is appropriate enough. It was to this inn that

THE ANGLERS' INN

Lizzie Hexam brought the apparently lifeless body of Eugene Wrayburn after her brave rescue of it from the water, following the murderous attack on him by Bradley Headstone.

“She rowed hard—rowed desperately, but never wildly—and seldom removed her eyes from him in the bottom of the boat. . . . The boat touched the edge of the patch of inn lawn sloping gently to the water. There were lights in the windows, but there chanced to be no one out of doors. She made the boat fast, and again by main strength took him up, and never laid him down until she laid him down in the house.”

This patch of green lawn sloping gently to the river coincides with that of the Red Lion, Henley. It was also in this inn, some weeks later, that Lizzie and Eugene were married. It was still uncertain if he would recover, and, in conformity with his wish, the ceremony was performed round his bed, the Rev. Frank Milvey officiating, Bella and her husband, Mortimer Lightwood, Mrs. Milvey and Jenny Wren being in attendance.

The Red Lion is a famous old coaching-inn, as well as a fishing and boating one of renown. It is not only very old but large. Standing by the bridge in prominent fashion it appeals to the eye at once :

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

'Tis a finely toned, picturesque, sunshiny, place,
Recalling a dozen old stories ;
With a rare British, good-natured, ruddy-hued face,
Suggesting old wines and old Tories.

to quote once more from Ashby Sterry's rhymes.

It was on a window in this old inn that Shenstone the poet scratched with a diamond about 1750 that celebrated stanza of his :

Who'er has travelled life's dull round,
Where'er his stages may have been,
May sigh to think how oft he found
The warmest welcome at an inn ;

—at least, so tradition has it. But Mr. Charles G. Harper thinks it doubtful, and feels that the Henley referred to by historians must have been Henley-in-Arden.

There is one inn mentioned in the book which has not, that we are aware of, been identified. It is the Exchequer Coffee-House, Palace Yard, Westminster, the address given by Mr. Julius Handford to Mr. Inspector on the occasion when he viewed the body of the drowned man (Bk. I, Chapter III).

CHAPTER XIII

THE MYSTERY OF EDWIN DROOD AND THE LAZY TOUR OF TWO IDLE APPRENTICES

WOOD'S HOTEL, FURNIVAL'S INN — THE TILTED
WAGON — THE TRAVELLERS' TWOPENNY — THE
CROZIER, CLOISTERHAM — THE KING'S ARMS,
LANCASTER—THE SHIP, ALLONBY—THE ANGEL,
DONCASTER, AND OTHERS

IT is a curious fact that Wood's Hotel, one of London's old-time inns which must have been familiar to Dickens in his very early days—even before he commenced writing his *Pickwick Papers*—did not furnish a scene in any of his books until it figured in *Edwin Drood*, his last.

As early as 1834, when on the staff of the "Morning Chronicle," Dickens lived at 13 Furnival's Inn, and in the following year moved to No 15, where he commenced *The Pickwick*

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Papers, and where he took to himself a wife and where his first child was born.

During these days Wood's Hotel occupied the north side of the quiet quadrangle of Furnival's Inn, and Dickens must have known it well. It was a staid and respectable house with an air about it of domestic comfort, suitable for country visitors, and where, we are informed, family prayers, night and morning, were included in the accommodation.

Its stately building of four stories had dignity added to it by the four tall white stone pillars in the centre portion of the front reaching to the third floor. Although stolid-looking, it was not aggressively so, nor was it altogether unpicturesque, with its grass plot immediately before the entrance, encircling a statue of the founder of the inn, surrounded by white posts connected by chains.

Its imposing appearance from without reflected the comforts which the inside of a reputable family hotel is expected to provide. At such an hotel one would naturally look for courteous attention from waiters and chambermaids, and good meals cleanly served, and at Wood's no disappointment in these respects was experienced. Indeed, Dickens conveys that idea in referring to it in *Edwin Drood*.

WOOD'S HOTEL, FURNIVAL'S INN

Entering through the archway of Furnival's Inn, the hotel caught the eye immediately, and acted as a relief to the straight, angular, and flat appearance of the buildings which formed the once famous quadrangle so intimately associated with Dickens.

It is believed by some, and was definitely stated to be a fact by a writer in the American magazine, the "Cosmopolitan," for May, 1893, and again by a writer in the "Middlesex and Hertfordshire Notes and Queries," July, 1895, that Dickens in his bachelor days had apartments on the second floor of the hotel in the right-hand corner, and that in the latter years of its existence the walls of this same room were decorated with pictures of scenes and characters from his works.

We have, however, been unable to find any authority for this statement. But it is quite possible that he frequented the hotel, and we may even assume that he and his friends, Hablôt K. Browne and Robert Young, who occupied rooms in Furnival's when they were executing engravings for *Pickwick*, would perhaps chat over details in a snug room in the hotel, when they would be joined by their other friend and engraver, Finden.

Bearing all these ideas in mind, it is certainly a little strange that Dickens waited for his last

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book before he introduced the hotel into his writings.

In that book we are told that Mr. Grewgious crossed over to the hotel in Furnival's Inn from Staple Inn opposite for his dinner "three hundred days in the year at least," and after dinner crossed back again. On one occasion, a very important interview between him and Edwin Drood took place in his chambers, and Edwin was pressed to stay for a meal. "We can have dinner in from just across Holborn," Grewgious assured him, and Bazzard, his clerk, was not only invited to join them, but asked if he would mind "stepping over to the hotel in Furnival's, and asking them to send in materials for laying the cloth. . . . For dinner we'll have a tureen of the hottest and strongest soup available, and we'll have the best made dish that can be recommended and we'll have a joint (such as a haunch of mutton) and we'll have a goose, or a turkey, or any little stuffed thing of that sort that may happen to be in the bill of fare—in short, we'll have whatever there is on hand."

Bazzard, after bringing out the round table, accordingly withdrew to execute the orders. His return with the waiters gives Dickens an opportunity for one of his humorous descriptive

WOOD'S HOTEL, FURNIVAL'S INN

passages which we make no excuse for quoting in full :

“Bazzard returned, accompanied by two waiters—an immovable waiter, and a flying waiter; and the three brought in with them as much fog as gave a new roar to the fire. The flying waiter, who had brought everything on his shoulders, laid the cloth with amazing rapidity and dexterity; while the immovable waiter, who had brought nothing, found fault with him. The flying waiter then highly polished all the glasses he had brought, and the immovable waiter looked through them. The flying waiter then flew across Holborn for the soup, and flew back again, and then took another flight for the made-dish, and flew back again, and then took another flight for the joint and the poultry, and flew back again, and between whiles took supplementary flights for a great variety of articles, as it was discovered from time to time that the immovable waiter had forgotten them all. But, let the flying waiter cleave the air as he might, he was always reproached on his return by the immovable waiter for bringing fog with him and being out of breath. At the conclusion of the repast, by which time the flying waiter was severely blown, the immovable waiter gathered up the table-cloth

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under his arm with a grand air, and, having sternly (not to say with indignation) looked on at the flying waiter while he set clean glasses round, directed a valedictory glance towards Mr. Grewgious, conveying: 'Let it be clearly understood between us that the reward is mine, and that *nil* is the claim of this slave,' and pushed the flying waiter before him out of the room."

Thus the waiters of Wood's Hotel, which was the name of the hotel referred to, although not mentioned by Dickens. Later in the book, we get a more intimate association with it. After the murder of Edwin Drood, Rosa Bud hurriedly takes coach from Rochester and presents herself to her guardian in his chambers. She is tired and hungry, naturally, and Grewgious, concerned for her welfare, asks her what she will take after her journey. "Shall it be breakfast, lunch, dinner, tea or supper?" he enquires.

"Your rest, too, must be provided for," he went on; "and you shall have the prettiest chamber in Furnival's. Your toilet must be provided for, and you shall have everything that an unlimited head chambermaid—by which expression I mean a head chambermaid not limited as to outlay—can procure."

WOOD'S HOTEL, FURNIVAL'S INN

"Rosa thanked him, but said she could only take a cup of tea. Mr. Grewgious, after several times running out, and in again, to mention such supplementary items as marmalade, eggs, water-



WOOD'S HOTEL, FURNIVAL'S INN

Drawn by L' Walker

cresses, salted fish, and frizzled ham, ran across to Furnival's without his hat, to give his various directions. And soon afterwards they were realised in practice, and the board was spread."

After a friendly chat over tea, he escorted her to her rooms. He "helped her to get her hat on

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

again, and hung upon his arm the very little bag that was of no earthly use, and led her by the hand (with a certain stately awkwardness, as if he were going to walk a minuet) across Holborn, and into Furnival's Inn. At the hotel door, he confided her to the unlimited head chambermaid, and said that while she went up to see her room he would remain below, in case she should wish it exchanged for another, or should find that there was anything she wanted."

Rosa's room was airy, clean, comfortable, almost gay. The Unlimited had laid in everything omitted from the very little bag (that is to say, everything she could possibly need) and Rosa tripped down the great stairs again, to thank her guardian for his thoughtful and affectionate care of her.

" 'Not at all, my dear,' said Mr. Grewgious, infinitely gratified ; 'it is I who thank you for your charming confidence and for your charming company. Your breakfast will be provided for you in a neat, compact, and graceful little sitting-room (appropriate to your figure) and I will come to you at ten o'clock in the morning. I hope you don't feel very strange indeed in this strange place.'

" 'Oh no, I feel so safe !'

WOOD'S HOTEL, FURNIVAL'S INN

“ ‘ Yes, you may be sure that the stairs are fire-proof,’ said Mr. Grewgious, ‘ and that any outbreak of the devouring element would be perceived and suppressed by the watchmen.’ ”

Having seen Rosa comfortably settled, he left her, assuring the night porter as he went that, “ if someone staying in the hotel should wish to send across the road to me in the night, a crown will be ready for the messenger.”

To the hotel next morning Mr. Grewgious went faithfully to time with Mr. Crisparkle, who had followed Rosa up from Rochester as fast as he could. Soon also Tartar arrived. After a long consultation between them about Mr. Landless and the use Tartar's chambers could be put to for certain spying purposes, Tartar took Rosa and Mr. Grewgious for a row up the river. Apartments ultimately being found for Rosa elsewhere, she left Wood's Hotel, and no further reference is made to it in the book.

In 1898 Furnival's Inn was demolished with its hotel. Upon its site now stand an insurance company's huge premises.

In Chapter XV, detailing Neville Landless's long tramp from Cloisterham, we are told that he stopped at the next road-side tavern to refresh. Dickens describes it in the following words :

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“Visitors in want of breakfast—unless they were horses or cattle, for which class of guests there was preparation enough in the way of water-trough and hay—were so unusual at the sign of the Tilted Wagon that it took a long time to get the wagon into the track of tea and toast and bacon; Neville, in the interval, sitting in a sanded parlour, wondering in how long a time after he had gone the sneezy fire of damp fagots would begin to make somebody else warm. Indeed, the Tilted Wagon was a cool establishment on the top of a hill, where the ground before the door was puddles with damp hoofs and trodden straw; where a scolding landlady slapped a moist baby (with one red sock on and one wanting) in the bar; where the cheese was cast aground upon a shelf in company with a mouldy table-cloth and a green-handled knife in a sort of cast-iron canoe; where the pale-faced bread shed tears of crumbs over its shipwreck in another canoe; where the family linen, half-washed and half dried, led a public life of lying about; where everything to drink was drunk out of mugs, and everything else was suggestive of a rhyme to mugs: the Tilted Wagon, all these things considered, hardly kept its painted promise of providing good entertainment for man and beast.”

THE TRAVELLERS' TWOPENNY

Mr. Edwin Harris, in his guide to Dickensian Rochester, has identified the Coach and Horses on the top of Strood Hill as the original of the Tilted Wagon.

The Travellers' Twopenny, where the boy deputy was a "man-servant," as he explained to Jasper, was originally the White Duck, and afterwards Kit's lodging-house, and stood in the Maidstone Road at Rochester. It degenerated into a crazy wooden sort of cheap public-house, and was not demolished before it was necessary. On its site now stands a business warehouse.

The Crozier, the "Orthodox Hotel," where Datchery lodged in the same city, was the Crown, and is dealt with in "The Inns and Taverns of Pickwick."

In the late autumn of 1857, Dickens and Wilkie Collins started "on a ten or twelve days' expedition to out-of-the-way places, to do (in inns and coast corners) a little tour in search of an article and in avoidance of railroads." Their selection was the Lake District, but the outcome of their expedition was not one article merely but a series of five under the title of *The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices*, written in collaboration. The two idle apprentices were Francis Goodchild and

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Thomas Idle, the first name being the pseudonym of Dickens.

These misguided young men, they inform us in the narrative, "were actuated by the low idea of making a perfectly idle trip in any direction. They had no intention of going anywhere in particular; they wanted to see nothing; they wanted to know nothing; they wanted to learn nothing; they wanted to do nothing. They wanted only to be idle . . . and they were both idle in the last degree." In that spirit they set forth on their journey

Carrock Fell, Wigton, Allonby, Carlisle, Maryport, Hesket Newmarket, were all visited in turn, and the adventures of the twain in these spots duly set forth in the pages of the book. In due course they came to Lancaster, and, the inn at that town being the most important of the tour, we deal with it first.

The travellers were meditating flight at the station on account of Thomas Idle being suddenly filled with "the dreadful sensation of having something to do." However, they decided to stay because they had heard there was a good inn at Lancaster, established in a fine old house; an inn where they give you bride-cake every day after dinner. "Let us eat bride-cake," they said,

THE KING'S ARMS, LANCASTER

“without the trouble of being married, or of knowing anybody in that ridiculous dilemma.” And so they departed from the station and were duly delivered at the fine old house at Lancaster on the same night.

This was the King's Arms in the Market Street, the exterior of which was dismal, quite uninviting, and lacked any sort of picturesqueness such as one associates with old inns ; but the interior soon compensated for the unattractiveness of the exterior by its atmosphere, fittings and customs. Being then over two centuries old, it had allurements calculated to make the lover of things old happy and contented. “The house was a genuine old house,” the story tells us, “of a very quaint description, teeming with old carvings, and beams, and panels, and having an excellent staircase, with a gallery or upper staircase cut off from it by a curious fence-work of old oak, or of old Honduras mahogany wood. It was, and is, and will be, for many a long year to come, a remarkably picturesque house ; and a certain grave mystery lurking in the depth of the old mahogany panels, as if they were so many deep pools of dark water—such, indeed, as they had been much among when they were trees—gave it a very mysterious character after nightfall.”

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A terrible ghost story was attached to the house concerning a bride who was poisoned there, and the room in which the process of slow death took place was pointed out to visitors. The perpetrator of the crime, the story relates, was duly hanged, and in memory of the weird incident bride-cake was served each day after dinner.

The complete story of this melodramatic legend is narrated to Goodchild by a spectre in the haunted chamber where he and his companion had been writing.

Dickens wove into the story much fancy and not a little eeriness, and it is said that the publicity given to it in *Household Words*, in which it first appeared, created so much interest that the hotel was sought out by eager visitors who love a haunted chamber. As this was situated in an ancient inn with its antique bedstead all complete, to say nothing of the curious custom of providing bride-cake at dinner in memory of the unfortunate bride, the King's Arms, Lancaster, discovered its fame becoming world-wide instead of remaining local.

At the time of the visit of Dickens and Wilkie Collins to this rare old inn, the proprietor was one Joseph Sly, and Dickens occupied what he termed the state bedroom, "with two enormous red four-

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posters in it, each as big as Charley's room at Gads Hill." He described the inn as "a very remarkable old house . . . with genuine rooms



THE KING'S ARMS, LANCASTER

Drawn by L. Walker

and an uncommonly quaint staircase." A certain portion of the "lazy notes" for the book were, we are told, written at the King's Arms Hotel.

On their arrival, Dickens and Collins sat down

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to a good hearty meal. The landlord himself presided over the serving of it, which, Dickens writes in a letter, comprised "two little salmon trout ; a sirloin steak ; a brace of partridges ; seven dishes of sweets ; five dishes of dessert, led off by a bowl of peaches ; and in the centre an enormous bride-cake. ' We always have it here, sir,' said the landlord, ' custom of the house.' Collins turned pale, and estimated the dinner at half a guinea each."

Mr. Sly became quite good friends with the two distinguished novelists, and cherished with great pride the signed portrait of Dickens which the author of *Pickwick* presented him with. He left the old place in 1879 and it was soon afterwards pulled down and replaced by an ordinary commercial hotel. Although the bride-cake custom was abandoned, and the haunted chamber with its fantastic story swept away, it is interesting to know that the famous oak bedstead, in which Dickens himself slept, was acquired by the Duke of Norfolk.

Mr. Sly, who died in 1895, never tired of recalling the visit of the two famous authors. He took the greatest pride in his wonderful old inn, and found real delight in conducting visitors over the building and telling amusing stories about Dickens and

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Wilkie Collins. Indeed, he was so proud of the association that he obtained Dickens's permission to reprint those passages of *The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices* relating to the hostelry, in pamphlet form, with an introductory note saying, "The reader is perhaps aware that Mr. Charles Dickens and his friend Wilkie Collins, in the year 1857, visited Lancaster, and during their sojourn stayed at Mr. Sly's King's Arms Hotel."

There is a further association with the inn and Dickens to be found in "Doctor Marigold's Prescriptions." We find it recorded there that Doctor Marigold and his Library Cart, as he called his caravan, "were down at Lancaster, and I had done two nights' more than the fair average business (though I cannot in honour recommend them as a quick audience) in the open square there, near the end of the street where Mr. Sly's King's Arms and Royal Hotel stands."

"Doctor Marigold" was published in 1865, seven years after Dickens's visit. But he not only remembered the King's Arms, but also Mr. Sly, the proprietor, who thus became immortalised in a Dickens story. Mr. Sly evidently was a popular man in the town, and his energy and good nature were much appreciated. That this was so, the following paragraph bears witness :

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It is recorded as an historical fact that, on the marriage of H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, the demonstration made in Lancaster exceeded any held out of the Metropolis. The credit of this success is mainly due to Mr. Sly, who proposed the programme, which included the roasting of two oxen whole, and a grotesque torchlight procession. The manner in which the whole arrangements were carried out was so satisfactory to the inhabitants of the town and neighbourhood that, at a meeting held a short time after the event, it was unanimously resolved to present Mr. and Mrs. Sly with a piece of plate, of a design suitable to commemorate the event. The sum required was subscribed in a few days, the piece of plate procured, and the presentation was made in the Assembly Rooms on the 9th of November by the High Sheriff, W. A. F. Saunders, Esq., of Wennington Hall, in the presence of a numerous company.

In its palmy days the King's Arms was a prominent landmark for travellers *en route* to Morecambe Bay, Windermere, the Lakes, and Scotland. It was erected in 1625, and in the coaching era was the head hotel in the town for general posting purposes, and was the most suitable place for tourists to break their journey going

QUEEN'S HEAD, HESKET NEWMARKET

North, or in returning. Consequently, it was one of the most important in the North of England.

The inn the two idle apprentices entered at Heskett Newmarket "to drink whiskey and eat oat-cake" is not named, but it has been identified with a house which is no longer an inn. At the time of the story it was called the Queen's Head, and was quite a prominent hostelry in the town, the innkeeper of which is described as having "a ruddy cheek, a bright eye, a well-knit frame, an immense hand, a cheery, outspoken voice, and a straight, bright, broad look. He had a drawing-room, too, upstairs, which was worth a visit to the Cumberland Fells."

"The ceiling of this drawing-room," we are further told, "was so crossed and re-crossed by beams of unequal lengths, radiating from a centre, in a corner, that it looked like a broken starfish. The room was comfortably and solidly furnished with good mahogany and horsehair. It had a snug fireside, a couple of well-curtained windows, looking out upon the wild country behind the house. What it most developed was an unexpected taste for little ornaments and knick-knacks, of which it contained a most surprising number," which Dickens goes on to describe in his own whimsical manner.

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Hesket has not altered very much, we understand, since those days, and the inn itself remains, not as an inn, but as a private house, and the room where the oat-cake and whiskey were served still has its crossed and re-crossed beams of unequal length.

From this inn, and under the guidance of the landlord, the two idle apprentices mounted Carrock—with what disastrous effects to Mr. Idle on the way down, readers of the story well know.

On again reaching the inn, under uncomfortable circumstances, they remained only a few hours, and continued the tour to Wigton in a covered carriage. Here, Mr. Idle was “melodramatically carried to the inn’s first floor and laid upon three chairs.” The King’s Arms is said to be the Wigton inn referred to, but no details are given of it in the book.

Their next halting place was Allonby, where they put up at the Ship. Thomas Idle, we are informed, “made a crab-like progress up a clean little bulk-headed staircase, into a clean little bulk-headed room, where he slowly deposited himself on a sofa, with a stick on either hand of him, looking exceedingly grim,” and both partook of dinner. The little inn is described as

THE ANGEL, DONCASTER

delightful, "excellently kept by the most comfortable of landladies and the most attentive of landlords." It still exists, and, "as a family and commercial hotel and posting-house commanding extensive views of the Solway Firth and the Scottish Hills," is apparently little altered since Dickens and Collins visited it. Its Dickensian associations are cherished by the owner to-day, who shows with pride the room occupied by the two literary giants.

After their visit to Lancaster, already referred to, the two idle apprentices went on to Doncaster, and arrived there in the St. Leger Race week. They put up at the Angel Hotel, where they had secured rooms, which Dickens described as "very good, clean and quiet apartments on the second floor, looking down into the main street." His own room was "airy and clean, little dressing-room attached, eight water-jugs . . . capital sponge bath, perfect arrangement, exquisite neatness."

Doncaster during the race week is described as a collection of mad people under the charge of a body of designing keepers, horse-mad, betting-mad, vice-mad. But the two novelists managed to find it enticing enough to remain there a week.

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The Angel Hotel was often called the Royal because Queen Victoria stayed there in 1851. It was built in 1810, has always been a celebrated hotel, and was a busy coaching-inn in those days. It remains much as it was when Thomas Idle lay in the room for a week with his bad ankle and his friend Francis Goodchild went roaming around the city with his usual observant eyes.

CHAPTER XIV

SKETCHES BY BOZ AND THE UNCOMMERCIAL TRAVELLER

THE GOAT AND BOOTS—THE BLUE LION AND
STOMACH WARMER—THE RED HOUSE—THE
FREEMASONS' TAVERN—THE EAGLE—OFFLEY'S
—THE RAINBOW—THE ALBION—THE FLOWER-
POT—THE BULL'S HEAD—THE DOLPHIN'S HEAD
—THE LORD WARDEN HOTEL—THE CRISPIN AND
CRISPIANUS

IN DICKENS'S minor writings there are mentioned many inns, taverns and coffee-houses, some merely fictitious with fanciful names, others whose fame has been recorded in the social history of their times. *Sketches by Boz* is fairly well supplied in this respect, but none of them is described at any length; indeed, scarcely anything but the names are mentioned, and those only in passing. In the second chapter of "Our Parish,"

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we are introduced to the new curate who became so popular with the ladies that their enthusiasm for him knew no bounds. It culminated, we are told, when "he spoke for one hour and twenty-five minutes at an anti-slavery meeting at the Goat and Boots." A proposal was forthwith set on foot to make him a presentation, and this, in the shape of a splendid silver ink-stand engraved with an appropriate inscription, was publicly handed to him at a special breakfast at the aforementioned Goat and Boots, "in a neat little speech by Mr. Gubbins, the ex-churchwarden, and acknowledged by the curate in terms which drew tears into the eyes of all present—the very waiters melted."

The Goat and Boots was no doubt a highly respectable hostelry, but its whereabouts is "wropped in mystery." So is the Blue Lion and Stomach Warmer, except that we are told that it was at Great Winglebury, and we know that Great Winglebury was a fictitious name for Rochester. But which was the inn that received this whimsical name at the hands of the novelist under whose roof Horace Hunter penned his challenge to that base umbrella-maker Alexander Trott, we are unable to state. On the other hand, the Winglebury Arms where Alexander Trott was

THE RED HOUSE, BATTERSEA

staying at the time was the Bull Hotel, Rochester.* The Red House, Battersea, casually mentioned in the chapter on "The River" as the "Red-us," was a popular tavern and tea-gardens in those days and notorious for its pigeon-shooting; indeed, tradition has it that it took the lead in the quality and quantity of the sport, and that the crack shots assembled there to determine important matches. It was also famous as the winning-post of many a boat race from Westminster Bridge, and was the place "where all the prime of life lads assembled," the joy and fun of which is vividly described by Dickens in the chapter referred to. It was a red-bricked building, and a prominent landmark of what was then known as Battersea Fields, the one-time scene of many a duel.

The Cross Keys mentioned in the chapter on "Omnibuses" we have already referred to when dealing with *Great Expectations*; whilst for particulars of the Golden Cross, the busy coaching-inn mentioned in "Hackney Coach Stands," and in "Early Coaches," we must refer the reader to "The Inns and Taverns of Pickwick."

The Freemasons' Tavern in the chapter on "Public Dinners" does not receive much attention

* See *The Inns and Taverns of Pickwick*.

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

from Dickens. He is describing the public dinner given in aid of the "Indigent Orphans Friends' Benevolent Institution," and no reference beyond the use of the name is made to the building itself. The tavern still stands to-day, and no doubt more glorious in its splendour than it was on the occasion of the public dinner Dickens refers to. It is used to-day for similar purposes, the ceremony and atmosphere at which being little changed from what it was then. It is interesting to note that in the same building a farewell dinner was given Dickens on the eve of his departure for America in 1867, with Lord Lytton in the chair.

The chapter devoted to the story of Miss Evans and 'the Eagle, recalls the notorious tavern immortalised in the famous jingle :

Up and down the City Road,
In and out the Eagle,
That's the way the money goes—
Pop goes the weasel !

and the chronicle of Miss Jemima Evans's visit to the highly famed pleasure-resort will contribute more towards retaining the Eagle on the recording tablets of history than the contemporary rhymster's poetic effort. It was in 1825 that the Eagle Tavern turned its saloon into what was the forerunner of the music hall, and was the making



THE EAGLE TAVERN PLEASURE GARDENS
From an old Print

THE EAGLE, CITY ROAD

of many a well-known singer. It was to this gay spot in London that Mr. Samuel Wilkins took Miss Jemima Evans, with whom he "kept company." They were joined in the Pancras Road by Miss Ivins's lady friend and her young man. We do not attempt to identify the Crown where they stayed on the way to taste some stout, and are content with the knowledge that they reached the rotunda where the concert was held, and to remind our readers of the impression it had on Miss J'mima Ivins and Miss J'mima Ivins's friend, who both exclaimed at once "How 'ev'nly!" when they were fairly inside the gardens. Dickens's description of the place will convey some idea of its splendour:

"There were the walks, beautifully gravelled and planted—and the refreshment boxes, painted and ornamented like so many snuff-boxes—and the variegated lamps shedding their rich light upon the company's heads—and the place for dancing ready chalked for the company's feet—and a Moorish band playing at one end of the gardens—and an opposition military band playing away at the other. Then, the waiters were rushing to and fro with glasses of negus, and glasses of brandy and water, and bottles of ale, and bottles of stout; and ginger-beer was going off

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

in one place, and practical jokes were going off in another ; and people were crowding to the door of the Rotunda ; and, in short, the whole scene was, as Miss J'mima Ivins, inspired by the novelty, or the stout, or both, observed, ' One of dazzling excitement.' As to the concert room, never was anything half so splendid. There was an orchestra for the singers, all paint, gilding, and plate-glass ; and such an organ ! . . . The audience was seated on elevated benches round the room, and crowded into every part of it ; and everybody was eating and drinking as comfortably as possible."

What happened to our friends there, and how the trouble over the waistcoat and whiskers was adjusted, is not our business here. The printed account must be read elsewhere. But we have quoted what is perhaps one of the best pictures of this famous resort extant.

Ultimately, the Rotunda was turned into the Grecian Theatre, and was not demolished until 1901. By then, of course, the real glory of the Eagle had departed and succeeding generations of Jemima Evanses and their young men friends had sought other glittering palaces for their pleasures.

There are two taverns mentioned in the following

OFFLEY'S, COVENT GARDEN

paragraph appearing in the chapter on Mr. John Dounce :

“ There was once a fine collection of old boys to be seen round the circular table at Offley's every night, between the hours of half-past eight and half-past eleven. We have lost sight of them for some time. There were, and may be still for aught we know, two splendid specimens in full blossom at the Rainbow Tavern in Fleet Street, who always used to sit in the box nearest the fire-place, and smoked long cherry-stick pipes which went under the table with the bowls resting on the floor.”

Offley's, long ago demolished, was a noted tavern in its day, and, according to Timbs, enjoyed great and deserved celebrity, though short-lived. It was situated at No. 23 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, and its fame rested on Burton ale and the largest supper-room in the neighbourhood. It had a certain dignity about it, and eschewed “ pictures, placards, paper-hangings, or vulgar coffee-room finery,” in order that its customers should not be disturbed in their relish of the good things provided. Of these good things may be mentioned Offley's chop, which was thick and substantial. The House of Commons chop was small and thin, and Honourable

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

Members sometimes ate a dozen at a sitting. "Offley's chop was served with shalots shred and warmed in gravy, and accompanied by nips of Burton ale, and was a delicious after-theatre supper." There was a large room upstairs with wines really worth drinking, and withal Offley's presented a sort of quakerly plainness, but solid comfort. There was singing by amateurs one day a week, and, to prevent the chorus waking the dead in their cerements in St. Paul's churchyard opposite, the coffee-room window was double.

Upon other evenings, there came to a large round table (a sort of privileged place) a few well-to-do, substantial tradesmen from the neighbourhood, and this was the little coterie to which Dickens refers.

The Rainbow, also mentioned in the quotation above, was the second house in London to sell coffee and was at one time kept by a Mr. Farr, who was prosecuted for the nuisance caused by the odious smell in the roasting of the berry. In later years (about 1780) the tavern was kept by Alexander Moncrieff, grandfather of the author of "Tom and Jerry," and was known as the Rainbow Coffee-House. In those days the coffee-room had a lofty bay-window at the south end, looking into the Temple; the room was separated from the

THE ALBION, GT. RUSSELL STREET

kitchen only by a glazed partition. In the bay was a table for the elders, amongst whom doubtless were the "grand old boys" Dickens speaks of as being always there, puffing and drinking away in great state. Everybody knew them, and it was supposed by some people that they were both "immortal."

In the chapter "Making a Night of It," we learn that Mr. Potter, in his "rough blue coat with wooden buttons, made upon the fireman's principle, in which, with the addition of a low-crowned, flower-pot, saucer-shaped hat," created no inconsiderable sensation at the Albion in Little Russell Street, and divers other places of public and fashionable resort.

"Making a Night of It" is no doubt mainly reminiscent of a merry evening in the business life of Dickens, and possibly the Albion was one of the favourite resorts of his, and of his co-clerk, Potter. In their day, the Albion was favoured by the theatrical profession and all those associated with things theatrical, and also by those young men who hung on the skirts of actors.

Dickens used the Albion in the 'fifties. In a letter to W. H. Wills (1851) there are instructions to order a plain cold supper at Simpson's, the Albion, by Drury Lane Theatre, for the next

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

play night. "I would merely have cold joints, lobsters, salad, and plenty of clean ice," he says. "Perhaps there might be one hot dish, as broiled bones. But I would have only one, and I would have it cheap." The play referred to was "Not so Bad as we Seem," which Dickens and his friends were rehearsing for the Guild of Literature and Art. The supper was to be paid for at so much per head, "not including wines, spirits or beers, which each gentleman will order for himself."

Mr. Percy FitzGerald tells of another evening when Dickens took his friends to the Albion. It was the occasion of Hollingshead's revival of "The Miller and his Men," and Dickens was determined to be there. He gave a little dinner party at "the good old Albion," and all were in great spirits, seated in one of the "boxes" or eating pews as they might be called, and then crossed over the Drury Lane Theatre afterwards.

In the chapter devoted to "Mr. Minns and his Cousin," in giving instructions as to the best way for Mr. Augustus Minns to get to Mr. Budden's in Poplar Walk, the latter says, "Now mind the direction; the coach goes from the Flower Pot in Bishopsgate Street, every half-hour. When the coach stops at the Swan, you'll see, immediately opposite you, a White House."

THE BULL'S HEAD

The Flower Pot was a coaching inn of some distinction in those days, for not only did the coaches ply between it and the north-east of London, but the inn was also the starting point of the Norwich coach and others to the eastern counties. The Swan was at Stamford Hill, and, beyond that it was the scheduled stopping-place for coaches, to and from London, we can find no record of its history.

The innumerable references to inns and taverns in *The Uncommercial Traveller* are for the most part purely imaginary. Even when it is clear that Dickens is describing something he actually saw and experienced, he has taken the precaution, in this book, to disguise the inn's name and whereabouts. There are several such in the chapter entitled "Refreshments for Travellers," a chapter made up of a series of complaints and adverse criticisms verging on the brink of libel. For instance :

"Take the old-established Bull's Head with its old-established knife-boxes on its old-established sideboards, its old-established flue under its old-established four-post bedsteads in its old-established airless rooms, its old-established frouziness upstairs and downstairs, its old-established cookery, and its old-established principles of

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plunder. Count up your injuries, in its side-dishes of ailing sweetbreads in white poultices, of apothecaries' powders in rice for curry, of pale stewed bits of calf ineffectually relying for an adventitious interest on forcemeat balls. You have had experience of the old-established Bull's Head stringy fowls, with lower extremities like wooden legs sticking up out of the dish; of its cannibalistic boiled mutton, gushing horribly among its capers; when carved; of its little dishes of pastry—roofs of spermaceti ointment erected over half an apple or four gooseberries. Well for you if you have yet forgotten the old-established Bull's Head fruity port; whose reputation was gained solely by the old-established price the Bull's Head put upon it, and by the old-established air with which the Bull's Head set the glasses and d'oyleys on, and held that Liquid Gout to the three-and-sixpenny wax candle, as if its old-established colour hadn't come from the dyers."

Had that inn been properly named at the time, the proprietor's ire would have been raised, with serious consequences.

Then there is the chapter on "An Old Stage-Coaching House," whose title seemed to augur well for our purpose. Yet, although it is interesting as picturing the decay of coaching and how it

THE DOLPHIN'S HEAD

resulted on a coaching town, there is nothing by which we can fix the name of the town, and so identify the Dolphin's Head there. It had been a great stage-coaching town in the great stage-coaching times, and the ruthless railways had killed and buried it. That is all we are told about its whereabouts.

“ The sign of the house was the Dolphin's Head. Why only head I don't know ; for the Dolphin's effigy at full length, and upside down—as a dolphin is always bound to be when artistically treated, though I suppose he is sometimes right side upward in his natural condition—graced the sign-board. The sign-board chafed its rusty hooks outside the bow-window of my room, and was a shabby work. No visitor could have denied that the dolphin was dying by inches, but he showed no bright colours. He had once served another master ; there was a newer streak of paint below him, displaying with inconsistent freshness the legend, By J. MELLOWS.

“ Pursuing my researches in the Dolphin's Head, I found it sorely shrunken. When J. Mellows came into possession, he had walled off half the bar, which was now a tobacco shop with its own entrance in the yard—the once glorious yard where the post-boys, whip in hand and always

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

buttoning their waistcoats at the last moment, used to come running forth to mount and away. A 'Scientific Shoeing-Smith and Veterinary Surgeon' had further encroached upon the yard; and a grimly satirical Jobber, who announced himself as having to let 'A neat one-horse fly, and a one-horse cart,' had established his business, himself, and his family, in a part of the extensive stables. Another part was lopped clean off from the Dolphin's Head, and now comprised a chapel, a wheelwright's, and a Young Men's Mutual Improvement and Discussion Society (in a loft); the whole forming a back lane. No audacious hand had plucked down the vane from the central cupola of the stables, but it had grown rusty and stuck at Nil: while the score or two of pigeons that remained true to their ancestral traditions and the place had collected in a row on the roof-ridge of the only outhouse retained by the Dolphin, where all the inside pigeons tried to push the outside pigeon off. This I accepted as emblematical of the struggle for post and place in railway times."

There are, however, at least three inns we have been able to trace: the Blue Boar, London (dealt with in a previous chapter), the Crispin and Crispianus at Strood, and The Lord Warden

THE LORD WARDEN, DOVER

Hotel at Dover. The latter is referred to in the chapter entitled "The Calais Night Mail" as follows :

"I particularly detest Dover for the self-complacency with which it goes to bed. It always goes to bed (when I am going to Calais) with a more brilliant display of lamp and candle than any other town. Mr. and Mrs. Birmingham, host and hostess of the Lord Warden, are my much esteemed friends, but they are too conceited about the comforts of that establishment when the Night Mail is starting. I know it is a good house to stay at, and I don't want the fact insisted upon in all its warm bright windows at such an hour. I know The Warden is a stationary edifice that never rolls or pitches, and I object to its big outline seeming to insist upon that circumstance, and, as it were, to come over me with it, when I am reeling on the deck of the boat. Beshrew the Warden likewise for obstructing that corner, and making the wind so angry as it rushes round. Shall I not know that it blows quite soon enough without the officious Warden's interference ? "

The Lord Warden was evidently built on the site of the Ship, as we have already noted in the chapter devoted to *A Tale of Two Cities*.

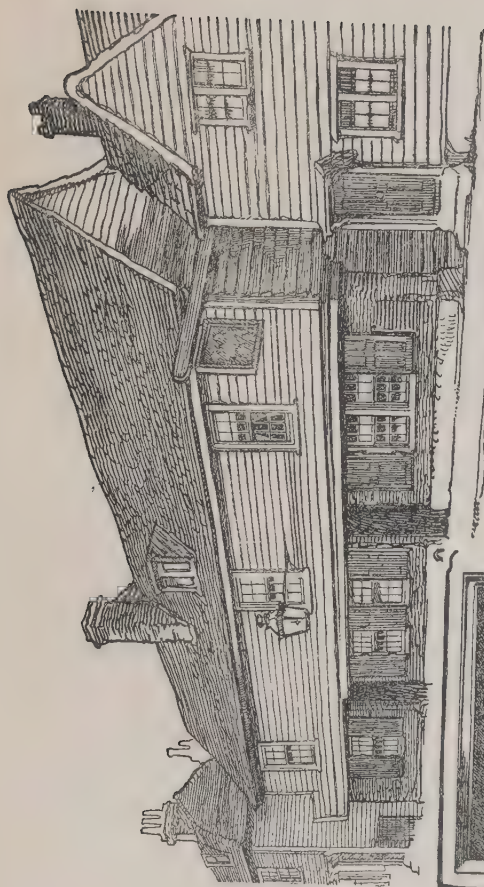
The Crispin and Crispianus at Strood is

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mentioned in the chapter on "Tramps." The tramp in question is a clockmaker, who, having repaired a clock at Cobham Hall, and paid freely for it, says, "We should be at liberty to go, and should be told by a pointing helper to keep round over yonder by the blasted oak, and go straight through the woods till we should see the town lights right before us. . . . So should we lie that night at the ancient sign of the Crispin and Crispianus, and rise early next morning to be betimes on tramp again."

The Crispin and Crispianus is a very old-fashioned inn still standing just outside Strood. It is a long building with an overhanging upper floor built with wood. How long the present house has existed we cannot tell, but its hanging sign speaks of St. Crispin's Day, 1415, and it is said that it may probably have had its origin from the Battle of Agincourt fought on that day. Mr. Harper thinks the sign older than that, and probably was one of the very many religious inn-signs designed to attract the custom of thirsty wayfarers to Becket's shrine.

The brothers Crispin and Crispian were members of a noble family in ancient Rome, who, professing Christianity, fled to Gaul and supported themselves by shoemaking in the town of Troyes.



THE CRISPIN AND CRISPIANUS
 Drawn by O. G. Harper



THE CRISPIN AND CRISPIANUS

They suffered martyrdom in Soissons in A.D. 287. The sign represents the patron saints of the shoe-making fraternity, as these holy brothers are designated, at work on their cobblers' bench, and is understood to have been faithfully copied from a well-known work preserved to this day at the church of St. Pantaleon at Troyes.

The inn's interior is typical of those to be found in country villages, with its sanded floor of the parlour, and wooden settles with arms at each corner. One of these corners is said to have been the favourite seat of Dickens, for it is known that he sometimes called at the inn as he drew near the end of one of his long walks, either alone or with friends, for refreshments. It was an inn, as he said elsewhere, that no thirsty man was known to pass on a hot summer's day.

CHAPTER XV

CHRISTMAS STORIES AND MINOR WRITINGS

THE MITRE INN—THE SALISBURY ARMS—THE PEAL
OF BELLS—THE NUTMEG-GRATER—THE DODO—
THE PAVILIONSTONE HOTEL—HEN AND CHICKENS—
THE SWAN

IN the First Branch of "The Holly Tree," in *Christmas Stories*, there are many inns far and wide referred to, and reminiscences associated with each recalled. These reminiscences may be personal to Dickens or merely of an imaginary nature. The Holly Tree Inn itself is real enough, and has been identified as the George, Greta Bridge, referred to in our chapter on *Nicholas Nickleby*. There is no doubt, either, that the inn in the cathedral town where Dickens went to school was the Mitre Inn at Chatham. "It was the inn where friends used to put up," he says, "and where we used to go to see parents, and to have salmon and fowls, and to be tipped. It had an

THE MITRE, CHATHAM
ecclesiastical sign—the Mitre—and a bar that seemed the next best thing to a bishopric, it was so snug. I loved the landlord's daughter to distraction—but let that pass. It was in that inn that I was cried over by my rosy little sister, because I had acquired a black eye in a fight.



THE MITRE INN, CHATHAM

From an engraving

And though she had been, that Holly Tree night, for many a long year where all tears are dried, the Mitre softened me yet."

The Mitre Inn and Clarence Hotel still exists at Chatham, very much as it was in Dickens's childhood days when his family lived in Ordnance

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

Terrace. It was kept in those days by a Mr. Tribe, who was a friend of John Dickens, and the two families met there and enjoyed many friendly evenings when Dickens and his sister, as he has told us, mounted on a dining-table for a stage, would sing some old sea-songs together. He had a clear treble voice then, but, recalling these incidents many years afterward, said, "he must have been a horrible little nuisance to many unoffending grown-up people who were called upon to admire him."

The Mitre Inn was described in 1838 as being the Manor House, and the first posting-house of the town. It is also on record that, at the close of the eighteenth century, Lord Nelson used to reside there when on duty at Chatham, and that the room he occupied was known as "Nelson's Cabin" till recent times. William the Fourth, when Duke of Clarence, used to stay there, hence the added word of Clarence to the sign.

The Salisbury Arms at Hatfield where Mr. and Mrs. Lirriper went upon their wedding-day, "and passed as happy a fortnight as ever happy was," adjoined the little post-office there, and now exists as a private house. Mr. Lirriper's youngest brother also had a sneaking regard for the Salisbury Arms, where he enjoyed himself for the

THE SALISBURY ARMS, HATFIELD

space of a fortnight and left without paying his bill, an omission Mrs. Lirriper rectified in the innocent belief that it was fraternal affection which induced her unprincipled brother-in-law to favour Hatfield with his presence.

It is believed that Dickens and Phiz stayed the night of October the 27th, 1838, at the Salisbury Arms, when they made their excursion to the West Country.

The scene of the first four chapters of "A Message from the Sea," is laid in "Steepways, North Devon, England," the name Dickens gives to Clovelly, and the story opens with a faithful and unmistakable description of one of the most beautiful and quaintest villages in England. To it comes Captain Jorgan to unravel a sea mystery, but no reference is made to his staying at the inn there. The task he has set himself, however, eventually takes him to another adjacent village, which Dickens calls Lanrean. There he puts up at the King Arthur's Arms, to identify which we must first identify Lanrean. That Dickens had a certain village near Clovelly in mind, there is little doubt, for he and Wilkie Collins, who collaborated in writing the story, went there for the purpose. Their description of Clovelly being so accurate and meticulous, it is only natural

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that Lanrean has a prototype, and, if found, the original of King Arthur's Arms would be forthcoming.

The original of the Peal of Bells, the village ale-house, in "Tom Tiddler's Ground," on the other hand, has been discovered, for Mr. Traveller seeking Mr. Mopes the Hermit, naturally had to go where Mr. Mopes the Hermit located himself. This we know to have been near Stevenage, and F. G. Kitton identified the ale-house as the White Hart there, where Dickens called on his way to see Lucas, the original of Mr. Mopes, to enquire of the landlord, old Sam Cooper, the shortest route to his "ruined hermitage" some five miles distant.

No particular coffee-houses were, we suspect, intended for the Slamjam Coffee-House or the Admiral Nelson Civic and General Dining Rooms, mentioned in "Somebody's Luggage"; nor can we hope to identify the George and the Gridiron, where the waiters supported nature by what they found in the plates, "which was, as it happened, and but too often thoughtlessly, immersed in mustard," or what was found in the glasses, "which rarely went beyond driblets and lemons."

No name either is given to the inn in "Mugby Junction" where the traveller arrived at past

BAKER'S CHOP-HOUSE

three o'clock on a tempestuous morning and found himself stranded. Having got his two large black portmanteaux on a truck, the porter trundled them on "through a silent street" and came to a stop. When the owner had shivered on the pavement half an hour, "what time the porter's knocks at the inn door knocked up the whole town first, and the inn last, he groped his way into the close air of a shut-up house, and so groped between the sheets of a shut-up bed that seemed to have been expressly refrigerated for him when last made."

It is known that Mugby stood for Rugby, but that is all. The particular shut-up inn, if it ever had any original, has not, so far as we are aware, been discovered.

In *A Christmas Carol* we are told that Scrooge "took his melancholy dinner in his usual melancholy tavern; and having read all the newspapers, and beguiled the rest of the evening with his banker's book, went home to bed."

There were many taverns in the city of London at which Scrooge might have dined, and it may be that Baker's Chop-House in Change Alley, as has been suggested, was the one he chose. It is no longer a chop-house, having a year or so back

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been taken over by a city business company, and the building added to their premises. But it had been for a century or more a noted city chop-house, where, up to the last, meals were served on pewter plates, and other old-time customs were retained. It was one of those city houses, of which some still exist happily, where the waiters grow old in the service of their customers. Baker's had at least one such waiter, known familiarly as James, who pursued his calling there for thirty-five years, and became famous by having his portrait painted in oils and hung in the lower room, where it remained until the end of the career of the house as a tavern. Perhaps old Scrooge was one of his special customers.

The Nutmeg-Grater, the inn kept by Benjamin Britain in "The Battle of Life," has no real prototype, but such an inn as described would entice any country rambler into its cosy interior. It was "snugly sheltered behind a great elm tree, with a rare seat for idlers encircling its capacious bole, addressed a cheerful front towards the traveller, as a house of entertainment ought, and tempted him with many mute but significant assurances of a comfortable welcome. The ruddy sign-board perched up in the tree, with its golden letters winking in the sun, ogled the passer-by,

THE NUTMEG-GRATER

from among the leaves, like a jolly face, and promised good cheer. The horse trough, full of clear, fresh water, and the ground below it sprinkled with droppings of fragrant hay, made every horse that passed prick up his ears. The crimson curtains of the lower rooms, and the pure white hangings in the little bedrooms above, beckoned Come in ! with every breath of air. Upon the bright green shutters, there were golden legends about beer and ale, and neat wines, and good beds, and an affecting picture of a brown jug frothing over at the top. Upon the window-sills were flowering plants in bright red pots, which made a lively show against the white front of the house ; and in the darkness of the doorway there were streaks of light, which glanced off from the surface of bottles and tankards "——

An ideal picture of an inn any traveller would love to encounter and sample.

Reprinted Pieces would form a happy hunting-ground for tracking down inns and public-houses mentioned in its pages if one were so minded. Few of them would prove to be of any importance if discovered, but the task would have its excitement and interest.

Take for instance the chapter devoted to the Detective Police. No doubt the taverns used by

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

the criminals which the police had to visit were real houses, as the detectives whom Dickens interviewed were real persons. In this chapter alone there is the Warwick Arms, through which, and the New Inn near R., Tally-Ho Thompson the horse stealer was tracked and captured ; the "little public-house" near Smithfield, used by journeymen butchers, and those concerned in "the extensive robberies of lawns and silks" ; and the Setting Moon in the Commercial Road, where Simpson was arrested in a room upstairs.

Then there is the extinct inn, the Dodo, in one of the chiefest towns of Staffordshire—the pivot of the chapter on "A Plated Article." Which is the town, and which is the inn referred to, we know not. But Dickens's description of it is very minute :

"If the Dodo were only a gregarious bird," he says, "if he had only some confused idea of making a comfortable nest, I could hope to get through the hours between this and bedtime, without being consumed by devouring melancholy. But the Dodo's habits are all wrong. It provides me with a trackless desert of sitting-room, with a chair for every day in the year, a table for every month, and a waste of sideboard where a lonely China

THE DODO

vase pines in a corner for its mate long departed, and will never make a match with the candlestick in the opposite corner if it live till Doomsday. The Dodo has nothing in the larder. Even now I behold the Boots returning with my sole in a piece of paper ; and, with that portion of my dinner, the Boots, perceiving me at the blank bow-window, slaps his leg as he comes across the road, pretending it is something else. The Dodo excludes the outer air. When I mount up to my bedroom, a smell of closeness and flue gets lazily up my nose like sleepy snuff. The loose little bits of carpet writhe under my tread, and take wormy shapes. I don't know the ridiculous man in the looking-glass, beyond having met him once or twice in a dish-cover—and I can never shave *him* to-morrow morning ! The Dodo is narrow-minded as to towels ; expects me to wash on a freemason's apron without the trimming : when I ask for soap, gives me a stony-hearted something white, with no more lather in it than the Elgin marbles. The Dodo has seen better days, and possesses interminable stables at the back—silent, grass-grown, broken-windowed, horseless. This mournful bird can fry a sole, however, which is much. Can cook a steak, too, which is more. I wonder where it gets its sherry ? If I were

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

to send my pint of wine to some famous chemist to be analysed, what would it turn out to be made of? It tastes of pepper, sugar, bitter-almonds, vinegar, warm knives, any flat drinks, and a little brandy. Would it unman a Spanish exile by reminding him of his native land at all? I think not. If there really be any townspeople out of the churchyards, and if a caravan of them ever do dine, with a bottle of wine per man, in this desert of the Dodo, it must make good for the doctor next day!"

If the Dodo is undiscoverable, the same need not be said of the Pavilionstone Hotel, because we know that Dickens gave that name to the town of Folkestone, in the chapter entitled "Out of Town." The lion of Pavilionstone, he tells us, is its great hotel, and one sees at once how he manufactured the name, for its hotel was, and is to-day, called the Pavilion.

"A dozen years ago, going over to Paris by South-Eastern Tidal Steamer," the narrative goes on, "you used to be dropped upon the platform of the main line Pavilionstone Station (not a junction then) at eleven o'clock on a dark winter's night, in a roaring wind; and in the howling wilderness outside the station was a short omnibus which brought you up by the forehead the instant



THE LORD WARDEN HOTEL, DOVER *See page 253*



THE PAVILION HOTEL, FOLKESTONE

From old Engravings

THE PAVILIONSTONE HOTEL

you got in at the door ; and nobody cared about you, and you were alone in the world. You bumped over infinite chalk, until you were turned out at a strange building which had just left off being a barn without having quite begun to be a house, where nobody expected your coming, or knew what to do with you when you were come, and where you were usually blown about, until you happened to be blown against the cold beef, and finally into bed. At five in the morning you were blown out of bed, and after a dreary breakfast, with crumpled company, in the midst of confusion, were hustled on board a steamboat, and lay wretched on deck until you saw France lingering and surging at you with great vehemence over the bowsprit."

This was written in 1855, and even by then Dickens had to admit that things had changed considerably for the better.

"If you are going out to Great Pavilionstone Hotel, the sprightliest porters under the sun, whose cheerful looks are a pleasant welcome, shoulder your luggage, drive it off in vans, bowl it away in trucks, and enjoy themselves in playing athletic games with it. If you are for public life at our great Pavilionstone Hotel, you walk into that establishment as if it were your club ; and

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

find ready for you your news-room, dining-room, smoking-room, billiard-room, music-room, public breakfast, public dinner twice a day (one plain, one gorgeous), hot baths and cold baths. If you want to be bored, there are plenty of bores always ready for you, and from Saturday to Monday in particular you can be bored (if you like it) through and through. Should you want to be private at our Great Pavilionstone Hotel, say but the word, look at the list of charges, choose your floor, name your figure—there you are, established in your castle, by the day, week, month, or year, innocent of all comers or goers, unless you have my fancy for walking early in the morning down the groves of boots and shoes, which so regularly flourish at all the chamber doors before breakfast that it seems to me as if nobody ever got up or took them in. . . .

“A thoroughly good inn, in the days of coaching and posting, was a noble place. But no such inn would have been equal to the reception of four or five hundred people, all of them wet through, and half of them dead sick, every day in the year. This is where we shine, in our Pavilionstone Hotel. . . .”

The hotel has, alas, made way for something still more imposing. Its extensive red-brick

THE HEN AND CHICKENS, BIRMINGHAM

building, containing hundreds of rooms, with its spacious gardens in front, would both astonish and disappoint the novelist if he saw it to-day, for there is no doubt that he was very fond of its predecessor, very frequently used it, and found hearty welcome there.

The hotel is again referred to in the sketch entitled "A Flight" in the same volume, where, however, he calls it the Royal George Hotel.

In the volume of *Miscellaneous Papers* there is one describing a visit to Birmingham and Wolverhampton, under the heading of "Fire and Snow." At the latter town Dickens stayed at the Swan, which he says "is a bird of a good substantial brood, worthy to be a country cousin of the hospitable Hen and Chickens, whose company we have deserted for only a few hours, and with whom we shall roost again at Birmingham to-night."

The Hen and Chickens here referred to was an hotel Dickens knew very well indeed. Apart from his books, Birmingham is very closely connected with Dickens himself and the various schemes he embarked upon for the welfare of others. He visited it on several occasions, either for the purpose of public reading from his works, to give theatrical performances for charity, or to appear

DICKENSIAN INNS AND TAVERNS

at some national function associated with the city. These visits were spread over the whole of his life, the last occasion being on the 7th of January, 1870, when he presented the prizes to the students of the Birmingham and Midland Institute.

During his stay in the city, Dickens usually put up at the Old Royal Hotel in Temple Row, or at the Hen and Chickens in New Street, and it may be assumed that he knew both hotels well. Only the former, however, is made the scene of an incident in his novels, and that is, when it is introduced into *The Pickwick Papers*.^{*} He visited Birmingham some dozen times from 1840 to 1870, and on most of the early occasions it is believed that he stayed at the Old Royal Hotel. But during his later visits he made the Hen and Chickens Hotel his headquarters. He was there in Christmas week, 1853, for the series of readings from his books, and before he left the city he and his friends were entertained at breakfast at the hotel, and a presentation was made to Mrs. Dickens.

He was a guest there again in 1861, and on the occasion wrote his autograph in the album of the proprietress, dated "Last day of the year 1861."

^{*} See *The Inns and Taverns of Pickwick*.

THE SWAN, WOLVERHAMPTON

For some reason he does not describe the hotel in the same manner as he does the Swan at Wolverhampton. The latter, he tells us, "has bountiful coal-country notions of firing, snug homely rooms ; cheerful windows looking down upon the clusters of snowy umbrellas in the market-place. . . . Neat, bright-eyed waitresses do the honours of the Swan. The Swan is confident about its soup, is troubled with no distrust concerning codfish, speaks the word of promise in relation to an enormous chine of roast beef. . . . The Swan is rich in slippers in those good old flip-flap inn-slippers which nobody can keep on, which knock double knocks on each stair as their wearer comes downstairs, and fly away over the banisters before they have brought him to level ground."

There are many other hotels and taverns mentioned in this collection of *Miscellaneous Papers*, but usually only by name, the mere list of which would serve no purpose.

Those already touched upon or dealt with at length in the course of the present volume practically exhaust the subject, from which it will be seen how overwhelmingly attracted Dickens was to every kind of house of refreshment and in every thing relating thereto. The works of no

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other author of genius provide so much material for such a purpose, and no other writer has treated the subject with so much healthy realism, so much refreshing good nature and humour, or with such expressions of genuine joy.

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